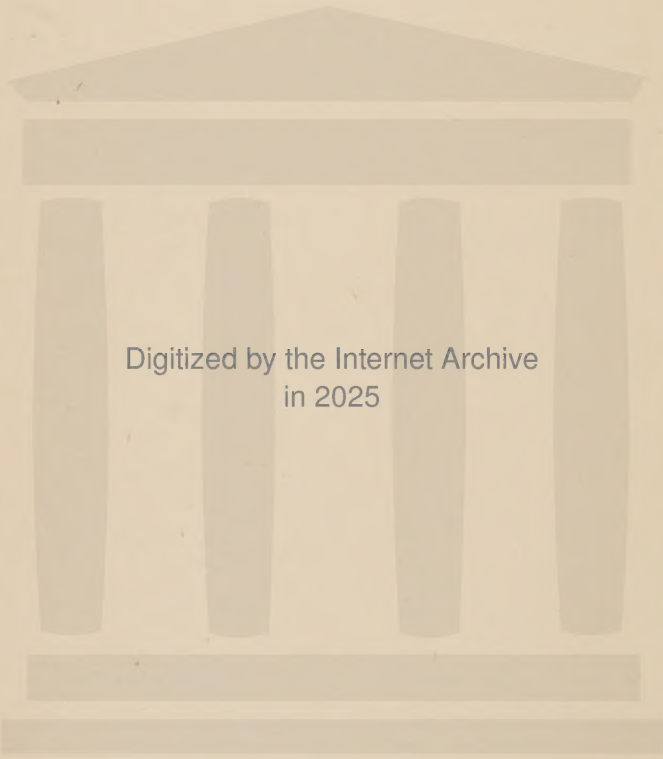


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BYWAYS IN
EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

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STUDIES IN THE UNCANONICAL GOSPELS
AND ACTS

THE KERR LECTURES, DELIVERED IN THE
UNITED FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW
DURING SESSION 1920-21

BY

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LINLITHGOW

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P R E F A C E.

IN choosing New Testament uncanonical writings as the subject of my Kerr Lectures, which were delivered in the early spring of 1921 to the students of the United Free Church College, Glasgow, I was influenced, on the one hand, by the fact that some earlier studies which I had undertaken lay in that field, and, on the other, by the desire to supply, what seemed in the absence of any similar work in English to be not unnecessary, an introduction to a body of literature which is comparatively little known. There was a time, a generation or two ago, when the only interest which was shown in the so-called "apocryphal" books of the New Testament was inspired by the aim to exhibit their inferiority to the canonical writings, and severe strictures, for the most part well deserved but lacking in discrimination, were passed on them. This method of approach had, no doubt, its historical justification in the fact that foolish claims had been made in behalf of the uncanonical books, but it had the serious defect of obscuring their value as historical documents for the study of early Christianity. For, as we are realizing to-day with increasing clearness, a prominent characteristic of Christianity in the first two centuries was its extraordinary diversity. Minds trained in different intellectual surroundings, and swayed by different religious and ethical preconceptions, naturally interpreted the facts of Christian experience and the historic

tradition in various ways. It is in the light thrown on this diversity of Christian thought that the chief value of the uncanonical writings lies.

How deeply I am indebted to others the book itself will make plain. But it is fitting that I should make special acknowledgment of my obligation to the admirable work, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (referred to as *NTA*), edited by Hennecke. In the latter part of the book, dealing with the Apocryphal Acts, I owe most to the writings of Dr. Carl Schmidt. Among English scholars two may be mentioned, from whom I have learned much, Dr. Montague James and Dr. Burkitt. To the latter I am especially indebted, not only for personal kindness, but also for assistance in writing the concluding chapter, derived from his fascinating book, *Early Eastern Christianity*.

My warm thanks are due to the Rev. R. G. Philip, Wester Pardovan, who revised the proofs with great care, and to Professor Hugh Watt, New College, Edinburgh, who read several of the chapters in manuscript.

ADAM FYFE FINDLAY.

LINLITHGOW,

April 1923.

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BYWAYS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE historical books of the New Testament—the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles—were not the only writings dealing with Christian origins which were known to the early Church. Before St. Luke wrote his Gospel towards the end of the first century, there had already, as he states in his preface, been many attempts to record for the purposes of the Christian mission the deeds and sayings of our Lord. With the exception of St. Mark's Gospel, all the previous evangelic narratives known to St. Luke have disappeared, although it may be taken as an accepted result of modern criticism that a writing concerned mainly with the teaching of Jesus, which in all probability was of an even earlier date than Mark, is incorporated with omissions and modifications in the First and Third Gospels. But although only three Gospels have come down to us from the first century, St. Luke's reference to his predecessors is of interest as pointing to a considerable literary activity in recording the facts of Christ's ministry; and this activity, which was demanded by the needs of the Christian mission when the eye-witnesses were rapidly passing away and the

Church had spread far beyond the bounds of Palestine, continued unabated for several generations. A veil of obscurity hangs over the early circulation and use of the first three Gospels and of the Fourth which was written about the year 110, but this at least is clear that with other Gospels as rivals in the field they gradually won their way to pre-eminence in virtue of their inherent worth. By the close of the second century the Church accepted them alone as authoritative sources for its knowledge of the life of Jesus; they had attained the rank of sacred Scriptures, and were regarded as writings divinely inspired to which nothing could be added, and from which nothing could be taken away. But before they were thus invested with exclusive authority, there had appeared in different Christian communities Gospels of various kinds in which the earlier tradition was manipulated and embellished for controversial purposes and under the influence of peculiar doctrinal and ethical tendencies. Moreover, there was so much in the story of Christian beginnings about which the Gospels in common use were silent, that the natural desire for fuller knowledge was exploited for doctrinal and apologetic ends, with the result that the primitive tradition was overlaid with accretions of a fictitious and legendary kind. Similar motives operated in the production of narratives which professed to set forth the deeds and teaching of individual apostles. Thus in the second century, the period with which we are concerned, there were many writings besides those now in the New Testament which claimed to rank as sources for the time of Jesus and the apostles. Some of these may have been read merely for private edification as supplements to the books which were read in church, but others were used in the services of public worship along with or in preference to those which eventually were canonized, until, through the exercise of ecclesiastical authority, they were relegated to greater or less obscurity.

In the following chapters some account will be given of a few of those later writings which deal, or purport to deal, with the origins of Christianity. Although they belong to the byways of Christian literature, they have an interest peculiarly their own. For just as we can never fully know a country unless we leave behind the great centres and the beaten roads and turn our steps to out-of-the-way places, so we cannot realize the manifold variety of life and thought in early Christianity, if we are content to read only the books which come to our hand on the main thoroughfares of the Church's activity and neglect those which had their home in the unfamiliar and secluded places of its life. It need hardly be said that the study of the little known uncanonical writings of the New Testament can have no claim to rank in importance with that which is directed to the classic documents of our faith, but the engrossing interest which these continually evoke as the historical records from which we derive our knowledge of the beginnings of Christianity, quite naturally whets the desire for information about any writings which may conceivably add some further detail to the picture. It may be said at once that our expectations in this direction should not be highly pitched. Second-century writings dealing with the life and teaching of Jesus and with the activity of the apostles have a character which, speaking broadly, forbids us to place them even approximately on the same level as the earlier records ; accordingly, our main concern with them will be, not to search for facts which will increase the knowledge given us in the historical books of the New Testament, but to examine them with the object of learning what light they have to cast on the religious and ethical conceptions of the communities whose needs they were designed to serve. Thus the writings which will claim our attention are to be regarded rather as documents for the study of early Church history than as sources for the knowledge of Christian

origins. Looked at in that way they have real and substantial value. They tell us something of Christian life and thought in the second century which we do not learn, or learn less clearly, from the works of sub-apostolic and patristic writers. They give us a glimpse of popular religion among Christians whose outlook on life was largely influenced by their pre-Christian inheritance, and of the interpretation put on the facts of the primitive tradition by believers who in outlying regions stood apart from the main currents of Church life. From this point of view they are important historical documents. Speaking of a later period of Church history, Dr. Bigg says: "If we want to understand the making of the mediæval Church we must go into the byways, we must listen, not to the masters of theology, but to the Campanian farmer complaining to St. Felix of the theft of his oxen, and menacing the saint if he does not make good the loss caused by his neglect."¹ Our studies may not bring us so close to the popular faith as in the case instanced, but they will serve to give us at least a partial view of the ideas which appealed to ordinary Christian people in the second century, and contributed not a little to the shaping of the old catholic Church.

This conception of our purpose in dealing with the writings which will come up for consideration puts into a subsidiary place a particular kind of treatment to which they have frequently been subjected. They have been used as a foil to exhibit the superior excellence of the canonical books to which they are related.² In the first English work dealing with New Testament apocryphal writings (Jeremiah Jones, *A new and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament*; first published in 1726), this is the point of view from which they are regarded. A similar apologetic motive is apparent in Ellicott's essay on "Apocryphal Gospels" (*Cambridge Essays*, 1856, pp. 153 ff.), in which, although it is observed

that "they illustrate some curious phases of early Christian thought and feeling," the writer's obvious aim is to display the superlative merits of the New Testament books when they are viewed alongside "these poor literary inamenities, these weak and foolish outpourings of heresy and credulity." I am far from suggesting that this is not a perfectly legitimate use to make of these later writings. We may quite properly contrast them, and cannot help contrasting them, with those which the Church has canonized, and when we do so, the result is very striking. We see at a glance what an incomparably rich inheritance we have received in the New Testament books. When we speak of inspiration, we speak of something which is extremely difficult to define; but of the presence in the New Testament of the living Spirit of God in such a manner as to give the book its unique and fundamental place in Christian literature we cannot be in doubt, when we compare the writings with which we are now concerned with those accepted by the Church. No one can read even the best of the apocryphal writings without realizing how far inferior they are to those in the canon with which they invite comparison. In this respect they stand in the same position as other second-century works, between which and the majority of New Testament writings there is a difference in spirit and in power which is nothing less than amazing. From the point of view of the historian of literature no line can be drawn between canonical and uncanonical books; all alike sprang from the Christian life of their age to serve the religious needs of the community, and it was only the call of a grave necessity in the Church's controversy with error that led to a distinct separation being made. Ultimately the selection rested on religious and dogmatic grounds, though not on these alone, but it was not the result of arbitrary official action; Church authorities simply registered the judgment of the unfettered mind of the great body of

Christian people. For a true conception of the validity of the New Testament as authoritative Scripture no fact requires to be more sharply emphasized than this, that, apart from the historical circumstances which led to the formation of the New Testament canon, the writings which were eventually canonized had already won their place of pre-eminence on the ground of their intrinsic merits and of their harmony with the common mind of the Church. Thus, canon or no canon, the inferior writings passed over or rejected by the fine spiritual feeling of the Church would inevitably have fallen into disrepute, or at least into a position of quite subordinate importance. That the Church made its choice with a wise discrimination cannot be questioned. It is hardly possible to overstate the profound difference which exists both in language and in spirit between the literature of primitive Christianity and that of the generations immediately following. "There is no more striking contrast," as Gwatkin says, "in the whole range of literature than that between the creative energy of the apostolic writers and the imitative poverty of the sub-apostolic. . . . The difference of canonical and uncanonical, so studiously ignored by some of the literary critics, is not a fiction of some Church authority, but a fact which no serious reader can fail to notice."³ It may be granted that in investigating the whole early Christian movement the distinction between canonical and uncanonical books should be left out of account: that is to say, the writings should not be studied from the point of view that some are sacred Scripture and that others are not; nevertheless, to hold our minds free for purposes of study from all such *a priori* conceptions will serve only to make clear the vital difference to which reference has been made. The New Testament books did not come into being as "canonical," but they possessed the qualities which gave them the right at a later period to be regarded as "canonical." There was some-

thing in them which the spiritual insight of Christian communities recognized as setting them in a place apart from other writings. The fact of this difference is indisputable, and it reflects the surprising change which had passed over the character of Christian experience in the course of one or two generations. The religious enthusiasm and sense of wonder in presence of the redemption wrought by Christ which characterized primitive Christianity had slowly ebbed, and on the falling tide there had gone the depth of feeling, the spiritual insight, and the intellectual power which a great faith inspires. Speaking of the fancies of the Neo-Platonists in their interpretation of Plato, Jowett remarked (it is not to our purpose to say with what truth): "They are the feeble expression of an age which has lost the power, not only of creating great works, but even of understanding them,"⁴ and that certainly is in large measure true of the Christian writings of the second century. It is accordingly not "apologetic" prejudice, but the inevitable judgment based on obvious facts, which quite definitely puts works like the uncanonical Gospels and Acts in a rank below, and occasionally far below, that which is occupied by the canonical writings of the same type. It may be sufficient to have emphasized this fact at the outset, because in the main it is not from this point of view that we propose to study the writings which we have selected for discussion.

In the subsequent studies, which are intended to be mainly expository, critical details will be kept as far as possible in the background. Unfortunately questions of criticism cannot altogether be avoided, and these naturally will bulk most largely in the case of the documents which exist in a fragmentary condition. But throughout the aim will be to get at the writer's mind, to learn what experience was behind his words, to discover by what ideas and interests he was influenced,

and thus to arrive at some conception of the ethical and religious *milieu* in which his work was produced. Occasionally this will be a matter of considerable difficulty. Where we have to deal with more or less disconnected fragments, the conclusions which are drawn as to the dominant aims which guided the writer must be advanced with much reserve. For it should be borne in mind that when fragments of a lost book are preserved in later writings there is a fairly strong presumption that the passages in question were selected, not because they were characteristic of the work as a whole, but because they exhibited some marked peculiarity which caught the attention of the author who quoted them. If it were a question, for example, of a lost Gospel which had followed one of the canonical Gospels somewhat closely, what we should expect to find in quotations given by ecclesiastical writers would be precisely those details in which there was a departure from the accepted tradition. In a case of that kind it would be difficult to make much of the fragments; and to draw from them far-reaching inferences as to the character of the book would be as uncertain and hazardous a proceeding as to attempt the reconstruction of an ancient building with nothing more to guide one than a few broken pillars.

As our study will be confined to historical books (uncanonical Gospels and Acts) of the second century and the early part of the third, the important question naturally arises whether good traditions not preserved in the canonical writings were likely to be available to the writers. That possibility cannot be excluded, for, on the one hand, it is evident that the record of events in primitive Christian history which we possess in the New Testament is a very meagre fragment of what might have been told of Jesus and the apostles; and, on the other, even when the tradition was reduced to writing in the form in which we have it, reminiscences of the early days of the

Gospel were transmitted orally from one generation to another. The most important reference to oral tradition is found in the words of Papias which are quoted by Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 39). Papias, whose recollections went back at least to the last decade of the first century, wrote five books entitled *Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord*, in the preface to which the following occurred in explanation of his method :

“ I shall not hesitate to set down for you along with my interpretations, by way of confirming their truth, all that I carefully learned from the elders and carefully remembered. For I did not take pleasure, as many do, in those who talk a great deal, but in those who teach the truth ; nor in those who relate alien commandments, but in those who record such as were given by the Lord to the faith and are derived from the truth itself. If, then, at any time a person came who had been a follower of the elders, I would inquire about the words of the elders —what was said by Andrew or by Peter, or by Philip or by Thomas, or by James or by John, or by Matthew or by any other of the Lord’s disciples, and also what Aristion and the elder John, disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from the utterances of a living and abiding voice.”

There are several considerations to be kept in mind in endeavouring to estimate the value of the oral reminiscences to which Papias refers. In general we should recognize how rapidly information conveyed in this way tends to deteriorate. That is a well-known fact on which there is no need to dilate ; we may simply add that in the case before us the inevitable process of deterioration was accelerated, when the existence of written records had removed the necessity of making any effort to secure the continuance of the tradition. But we are not left to draw deductions from general considerations. There is the very remarkable fact that when our first and third evangelists towards the end of the first century set themselves the task of writing their Gospels, they borrowed their narrative-material largely from St. Mark, and that apart from the material

from the common source which they used, dealing with our Lord's teaching, they had comparatively little to add to the account of the ministry of Jesus which lay before them in the second Gospel. That is significant, especially when we bear in mind what St. Luke says about the aim which guided him in his work. It proves, at least so far as the *events* in our Lord's life are concerned, that St. Mark had included in his Gospel practically all the available material which was known to exist. That there was so little remembered of the details in the life of Jesus when the earliest Gospel was written may seem surprising, but the inference to be drawn is that the thoughts of the primitive community were so intently set on our Lord's second coming, that they were little concerned with the biography of Jesus, and only so far concerned as to retain from the story of His life typical incidents and notable events which had a value for their faith.

There is this further fact to be kept in view when we inquire whether the writers of the second century had access to well-authenticated traditions about Jesus and the apostles. Whatever traditions were in existence, Papias evidently made it his business to collect them with pious and assiduous care. And with what result? Clearly those who were acquainted with his "Expositions" were not much impressed by the store of fresh evangelic material which he had gathered, for had there been anything of value in it, it would have been referred to and preserved by subsequent writers. Very meagre fragments of the work of Papias have survived, and among the traditions which they contain the following may be mentioned. "Judas walked about in this world, a terrible example of impiety; his flesh swollen to such an extent that, where a waggon can pass with ease, he was not able to pass, no, not even the mass of his head merely. They say that his eyelids swelled to such an extent that he could not see the light at all, while as for

his eyes, they were not visible even by a physician looking through an instrument, so far had they sunk from the surface." About Justus, who was surnamed Barsabas, it is told on the authority of the daughters of the Apostle Philip that "he drank a deadly poison and yet by the grace of the Lord suffered no inconvenience." A tradition as to the martyrdom of the Apostle John, to which importance is attached by some scholars, is thus recorded in the *Chronicon* of Georgios Hamartolos: "Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who was an eye-witness of (John), in the second book of the Oracles of the Lord, says that he was killed by the Jews, and thereby evidently fulfilled, together with his brother, Christ's prophecy concerning them and their own confession and undertaking on His behalf." Further, on the testimony of Eusebius, we learn that Papias "related another story about a woman accused of many sins before the Lord, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews also contains." These examples do not warrant us in attaching a very high value to the traditions collected by Papias. Eusebius, to whom we owe our chief information about him and his book, had a poor opinion of both; the writer of the "Expositions" was an extremely credulous and undiscerning person and "a man of very mean capacity," while the almost contemptuous reference which Eusebius makes to the traditions reported by him shows that he regarded the book as almost worthless. "He has recorded (Eusebius says) other notices as having come down to him from oral tradition, certain strange parables of the Saviour and teachings of His, and some other statements of a rather mythical character. Among which he says that there will be a period of some ten thousand years after the resurrection, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this earth.⁵ These ideas, I suppose, he got through a misunderstanding of the apostolic accounts, not perceiving that the things recorded there in figures were spoken

by them mystically" (*H.E.* iii. 39. 11 f.). All this goes to show that in the second century oral tradition flowed as a feeble and troubled stream, and that our expectation of finding in the uncanonical writings anything of value derived from that source should be extremely humble.

In this introductory chapter it may be desirable to indicate a few of the broad features which characterize much of the literature which we are to discuss. We make the preliminary observation, which should be self-evident, that at any given time the existing form of Christianity is relative to the whole mental attitude of the age. The truth of this is sometimes forgotten, with the result that there is a disposition in certain quarters to regard the conception of Christian truth and duty with which one is familiar as final and complete, and in other quarters to hark back to the early days of the Church with the expectation of finding there a sure norm in matters of belief and conduct. To act in either of these ways is to ignore the essential character of Christianity as a new life inspired and sustained by our Lord which from the very nature of the case is ever growing and adapting itself to new conditions and needs, and to forget that the living Spirit of God has a revelation for every age, and that it is our business to listen as He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. We may learn much from our study of the past; we may receive guidance from the mistakes which early Christians made and from the misconceptions of which they were guilty; we may even find that they emphasized truths which we are allowing to fall out of sight; but most of all we learn from them that it is our duty to think out fearlessly in loyalty to the spirit of Jesus our own conception of the Christian faith and life. "Our task, as we are coming at last to realize, is not to take over the opinions of those old teachers ready made, but to do in our own time what they did in theirs."⁶ We cannot simply transplant

the ideas of the past and hope to find them satisfying to our mind and conscience—we cannot do that for the plain reason that these ideas belonged to a world of thought from which the centuries have irrevocably divided us. This, however, is by the way. As we read the writings of the second century, we see men striving with all the insight of which they were capable to construe the facts of revelation, the person of Christ, His redemptive work, His ethical demands, and we realize that as they so strove their conceptions were conditioned and moulded by their intellectual and moral environment. “There was a continuity between their present and their past; the new ideas and new motives mingled with the waters of existing currents.”⁷ This did not necessarily mean that Christian truth entered into a compromising alliance with alien elements, although in point of fact that was frequently the case. The temper of the age was syncretistic, leading to the fusion of disparate ideas through a process of mutual accommodation, and the creative energy of a great faith was absent, such as enabled a Christian thinker like St. Paul to use inherited modes of thought without sacrificing that which was characteristic of the new revelation in Christ. That is the essential difference between Christianity as conceived by the apostle to the Gentiles and Christianity as we find it in writers two or three generations later. St. Paul made use (he could not do otherwise) of categories which formed part of his mental inheritance from Judaism and Hellenism, but into them he poured the riches of Christian truth, in the conception of which his experience of redemption through Christ was the decisive formative influence. He spoke the language of his time, but into the words he put a new meaning. He used terms current in Hellenistic theology, but he and the pagan teachers had different realities in view, or gave to the same realities a different value. *Si duo idem dicunt, non est idem*. As von Dobschütz has well said: “Words, formulæ,

are in themselves indefinite and capable of many interpretations; they are like wax from which the artist can shape anything. The greater the genius the artist is, the more original will his creation be. Thus in the case of a formula everything depends on the person who uses it and on what he makes of it. In this, in my judgment, lies a fault of the modern so-called religious-historical exegesis with its preference for realistic interpretation: it operates with the ideas as with minted coin instead of inquiring about the stamp which they bear. . . . As Jesus in speaking of the Divine kingdom or of the Messiah understood something quite different from what the Jews of His time thought, so Paul transformed the idea of the Divine righteousness, of justification, whenever he gave it a place in his religious conceptions.”⁸ It may be granted that St. Paul’s borrowings from Hellenistic thought are greater than many are disposed to allow, and that he was not free from influences which led to some refraction of Christian truth as it passed through his mind; but to speak of syncretism in connection with his representation of the Christian faith, is to use words without meaning. To him Christ was all in all, and although he was obliged as a man vitally rooted in the life of his age to employ modes of thought which doubtless failed adequately or at least fully to express the revelation given in Christ, there can be no question that it was Christ and the experience of His salvation that controlled all his thinking and made it impossible for him to admit on equal terms into his conceptions of Christian truth, elements foreign to the Gospel.⁹ But it was different in the second century. The minds of men who had accepted Christ lay under the spell of inherited ideas, from which their faith in Christ was not pure enough or robust enough to set them free. The result was that in their apprehension of Christianity there was often a blending of conceptions of diverse origin which could be held only at the

cost of surrendering elements vital to the Christian faith. There was in this, as a rule, little that was due to the spirit of deliberate compromise. The conciliation of the pagan world through the acceptance of its thoughts and superstitions became in later days the definite policy of the Church, with results which were disastrous to the purity of the faith;¹⁰ but in the second century, apart from the theology of Gnostic schools, what we see is an unconscious accommodation of Christian truth to the conceptions already present in the mind. Nothing could have guarded against this but a firm grasp of the historic revelation in Jesus Christ and a sure insight into its meaning, and this was what was lacking in the Christianity of the period. The impact of alien forces was too severe for a faith which, while maintaining its consciousness of the presence of the unseen Lord, had lost touch with the historic Personality in whom the Divine grace and truth had been made manifest.

Of the features due to the intellectual environment of the age, of which we find abundant traces in the literature which we are to study, three may be mentioned : (1) the craving for the miraculous as a sign of the Divine origin of Christianity ; (2) the legalistic conception of the Christian life ; and (3) the influence of the prevalent world-view on Christian truth. These will not be apparent in equal measure in the various writings which fall to be considered, and in some the traces of them are faint ; but in general it may be said that the presence of the features which have been mentioned is characteristic of the popular literature of the second century.

1. *The Craving for the Miraculous*.—Miracle cannot be eliminated from the history of Christian origins. Extraordinary events are part of the tissue of the Gospel story, and we have no right to deny that works similar to Christ's were wrought by the apostles (see apart from the Acts, Rom. xv. 18 f. ; 2 Cor. xii. 12). It may be allowed that in some instances the

stories which record them have received a heightening of colour in the process of oral transmission, and that in others parabolic utterances have been realistically depicted in the shape of physical transactions, but for the most part the New Testament miracles are so relevant to the context of events where no scepticism is warranted, and so bound up with teaching indubitably authentic, that we cannot regard them as legendary developments or as the offspring of poetic fancy. "If we were to eliminate from the record in any wholesale way Jesus' deliberate use of powers which He regarded as supernatural, much of His most characteristic teaching would be robbed of its pregnancy, and some manifestly authentic sayings about the power of faith would be reduced to the level of irresponsible rhetoric."¹¹ Whatever hesitancy we may feel in matters of detail, the fact that Jesus wrought miracles is a sure result of historical criticism. His wonderful works were the outcome of His unique relationship with God. As Wendland says: "He looked to God for amazing things, and in that faith He was granted stupendous experiences."¹² Starting from the miracles of Jesus, we shall be able better to appreciate the later developments in which the supernatural was frequently conceived as sheer power working in a grotesque and magical fashion. In Christ's ministry miracles were not isolated wonders, wrought for the express purpose of startling the beholders into faith; they were an integral and essential part of His activity as the Saviour of men. They belonged to the substance of the revelation which it was His vocation to impart. By their beneficent character they had the inherent power of appealing to conscience and of making more easily credible His message of the love of God. Viewed in that way, they were signs of the Divine presence and redemptive energy in a world disorganized, and it was the gravamen of Christ's charge against those among whom His ministry was spent,

that they were so blind and unspiritual that His deeds had no effect in opening their hearts for the Divine approach. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. xi. 21; Luke x. 13). While this was so, and His miracles were part of His endeavour to win men, Jesus refused to substantiate His claims by mere exhibitions of power. He withstood the demand for signs. Thus in general, for there are marvellous events of another kind reported in the Gospels, the wonderful works which Jesus wrought are of such a character that they should be regarded as a revelation of the Divine grace flashing out in redemptive action. One additional fact about them may be mentioned in a word: they cost Christ something to do them. They put a strain upon His spirit as though He were measuring His strength against a malignant and opposing power; in working His miracles "virtue went out of Him." It is when we note the sobriety of the New Testament narratives and the character which the recorded miracles have, that we realize into how different a world we have entered, when we read of the non-moral prodigies contained in some second-century Gospels and Acts. In them the appetite for the marvellous has overpassed all bounds of restraint. The farther we travel from the primitive age, the deeper we penetrate into the rank undergrowths of credulity. Events described in the New Testament with simplicity and becoming reticence are embellished by later writers with extravagant supernatural details. Deeds which were wrought by Jesus with evident travail of soul are done by the apostles with perfect ease. But what is most striking in the later tales of wonder is the altered conception of the meaning and purpose of miracles. They are no longer thought of as the revelation of a great moral personality and calculated on that account to make appeal to

conscience ; they have significance as infallible evidences of Divine operation, apart from any moral content, in the mere fact that they are extraordinary. They are employed to coerce or awe the minds of men into an attitude of belief. The value thus assigned to miracle is strikingly expressed in the Acts of Peter (ch. vii.), where St. Paul's saying, "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power," receives the following interpretation : "I (the Apostle Peter) did not come to convince you by words that He whom I preach is the Christ, but relying on marvellous deeds and powers I warn you by faith in Christ Jesus that none of you look for another (Saviour) than He who was despised." That is a characteristic utterance. It reflects the weakened sense of the moral working of the Divine Spirit which was prevalent in Christian circles in the second century, and the temper, by no means confined to that century, which suggests that faith would be easy if miracles were wrought and men rose from the dead.

2. *The Legalistic Conception of the Christian Life.*—The great Pauline doctrine of Justification by Faith went straight to the heart of our Lord's teaching that the Divine salvation, whereby the burden of sin was lifted off and new motives of obedience were implanted in the soul, was in no sense dependent on human merit, but on the free and undeserved mercy of God. This doctrine had almost disappeared from the consciousness of the Church in the second century. Even when there were echoes of St. Paul's language, there was little appreciation of the truth which he had urged so passionately. The doctrine of meritorious works obscured the truth of the unconditional freeness of the Divine forgiveness. How far men were from entering with any intelligence into the meaning of St. Paul's controversy with legalism may be gathered from a statement in the Acts of Paul, where the apostle is represented as saying : "a man is not justified by the law, but he is justified by the

works of righteousness." Here we have no longer the Pauline antinomy between Law and Grace, between the righteousness which is of works and the righteousness which is by faith, but something altogether different. Whatever the writer may have meant by the distinction which he formulated in the words quoted above, it is clear that his conception of salvation rested on a nomistic basis just as surely as the doctrine of the scribes and Pharisees. And the reason was that in common with other Christians in the second century generally he had failed to understand the vital significance of faith. He did not realize that it meant the surrender of the whole being whereby a man entered into union with the living Christ and appropriated the Divine grace which gave him a new standing in the sight of God and acted as the principle of a new life.¹³ The evangelic conception of salvation in which the grace of God is absolutely central, in which the free and unmerited bestowal of forgiveness brings men into a right relation to God and becomes in the hearts of those who experience it the inspiration of willing obedience to the Divine law—that conception of salvation was obscured by the doctrine that grace was only a beginning and needed to be supplemented by good works. Thus the emphasis in the Christian life came to rest more and more on what men accomplished through their own endeavours. "The way of salvation was the keeping of the Divine commandments. . . . The essence of the Gospel was seen on the legal side ; the Gospel was not primarily the offering of grace, but a message which prescribed how one ought to live rightly."¹⁴ In conformity with this the work of Christ, the object of His coming into the world, was not associated with His death as a propitiation, but was viewed as the revelation of the Divine law which had been obscured by Jewish misconceptions. Christ accomplished His work as the bringer of a new law, in the keeping of which alone men could hope for

salvation. The inevitable result of this view was that in place of the peace of acceptance with God there was a troubled sense of insecurity arising from the consciousness of moral failure, and that in place of the joy of the new life in which the commandments of God were not grievous, there was a feeling of responsibility almost too heavy to be borne. One fact helped to mitigate the burden thus laid upon the soul, and that was the assurance of Christ's presence. Christians were not thrown wholly on their own resources. But this did not alter their theory of life. Christianity was conceived as a new law imposed by Christ, and not as a new life given and sustained by Him. And apart from the latter, the former was apt to appear too high a demand. That is what gave point to the criticism of Trypho the Jew in Justin's *Dialogue* (ch. x.): "I well know" (said he), "that your Christian precepts out of what is called the Gospel are great and admirable, so admirable, indeed, that I doubt if any one can keep them." The doubt which Trypho expressed was shared by Christians themselves, as it was bound to be so long as they were entangled in a legalistic theory of salvation, and were blind to the truth that the keeping of the Christian precepts is vitally connected with the new life which Christ bestows. We are not surprised, accordingly, to find that concessions began to be made to human weakness. "If thou art able," we read in the *Didache* (ch. vi.), "to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect; but if thou art not able, do that which thou canst." Thus as the fruit of legalism there appeared in the teaching of the Church the sinister doctrine of a double standard of morality, with its distinction between works which were essential to salvation and works which acquired merit in the sight of God. The classical passage for this conception in second-century writings is in *Hermas* (*Sim.* v. 3), where we read: "Keep the commandments of the Lord, and thou shalt be well pleasing to

God, and shalt be enrolled in the number of them that keep His commandments. But *if thou do any good thing beyond the commandment of God, thou shalt win for thyself more exceeding glory.*" We cannot doubt that this was one root of the asceticism which flourished in the second and later centuries and has left so deep a mark in the apostolic romances.

3. *The Influence of Hellenistic Thought on Christian Truth.*

—To this we have already referred in general terms ; we must now go into the matter a little more particularly. In the second century the prevailing world-view was dualistic. Material existence was conceived as something inherently evil, with which the transcendental world of invisible realities had nothing in common. There were two consequences from this view of things which affected Christian thought. The first was the prevalence of an ascetic morality involving a negative attitude to everything associated with the material world. We shall have occasion later in dealing with the apostolic romances to consider what influences contributed to the acceptance of this theory of life in the Christian Church. It did not rest wholly, or perhaps even mainly, on a dualistic basis, but unquestionably the ascetic temper which was explicable as arising from Christian motives was powerfully stimulated by the spirit of the age, with its craving for deliverance from the bonds of sense and from the dominion of the demonic rulers of this world. Salvation in Hellenistic thought consisted in union with the Divine nature ; and although it might be anticipated in moments of ecstasy, it could be perfectly attained only when the prison-house of material existence, with which God as pure Spirit had nothing to do, was finally left behind. This view of salvation as a future good, unattainable in a world of sense, which had points of contact with Jewish eschatology, early dominated the minds of Christian people, with the natural result that the concerns of the present life were regarded as something foreign

to their real interests. Asceticism, embracing virginity, fasting, and voluntary poverty, became the Christian ideal. The world was looked upon, not as a place of spiritual opportunity where life might be enriched by making all things serviceable to the Divine kingdom, but as a place of preparation for a future salvation through the suppression of natural instincts and abstinence from earthly joys and concerns.

The dualistic view of things influenced Christian thought in another direction. It strengthened a tendency, which had come into existence independently of it, to construe the person and work of Christ in a docetic way. It deserves very properly to be emphasized that Docetism in the early Church was not solely the product of Hellenistic dualism. That serious misconception of Christ which robbed His humanity of all reality and made the whole of His earthly life a mere shadow of supra-mundane events, an appearance (*δόκησις*) with no substance behind it, had points of contact with the views of the most orthodox. It should be kept in mind that Christian thought in early days centred, not on the human figure of Jesus as He lived and taught in Palestine, but on the heavenly Christ who had ascended far above principalities and powers and had sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It was not easy for those who thus habitually thought of Christ to associate any human weakness with Him, and the more firmly they held to the assurance of His divine dignity, so much the more the features of His earthly life faded from their sight. Thus "it is not surprising" (as Burkitt says), "that to many a believer the melancholy story of Jesus of Nazareth was a stumbling-block and that His sufferings were incredible."¹⁵ Indeed it is not too much to say that in the second century it was not our Lord's divinity but His humanity that caused most difficulty. Christian people were not at home with the thought of a Saviour who had walked in lowliness with men. Even to those who

like the Ebionites of the left wing held that Jesus was born as other men, the Lord in whom they believed was not *φιλὸς ἀνθρώπου*—mere man; He was a Divine Being who temporarily took up His abode in Jesus and then returned to heaven when His work was accomplished. In whatever way men sought to conceive of Christ, it was the thought of His humanity that was liable to be pushed into the background. Quite obviously Docetism was a necessity for those whose philosophy was dualistic, if they were to maintain their faith in a Divine Saviour; Divinity tabernacling on earth in a real human life was to them an impossible thought. But apart from the influence of that philosophy a docetic strain appeared in the most orthodox thinking. We see the same thing happening still. "The devout are always falling into this heresy un-awares."¹⁶ They find a difficulty in believing that Jesus was really tempted as we are, and that there were many things of which He was ignorant. They hardly know what to make of the prayers of Jesus; the thought does not strike home that the life which He lived was a life of faith. All this perhaps is not surprising in those to whom Christ is Saviour and Lord, and it is sufficient to make clear how, apart from any dualistic conceptions, Christians in early days fell into docetic error. They were face to face with the fundamental problem of Christian faith—how to conceive the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus, and when they despaired of interpreting the mystery, persuaded that His divinity must be maintained at all costs, they cut the Gordian knot by sacrificing His real humanity.

Naturally this tendency to Docetism which was prevalent even among the orthodox became a pronounced conviction when men held the belief that all material existence was evil. Then there was no other course open than to deny the Incarnation and to regard the whole of Christ's life on earth as an appearance

only. Among the Gnostics and all who fell under their influence theories of diverse kinds were held as to Christ's nature, but all alike denied that it possessed true human reality. In his book, *Ancient and Modern Christologies*, the late Professor Sanday says: "Docetism was not all folly. Rather we may regard it as one primitive form of the assertion of that mystical element which has never been wanting to Christianity from the first days until now, and we may be sure never will be wanting to it" (p. 9). That may be so, but the Church with a sure instinct realized that whatever truth Docetism was endeavouring to express, it went the wrong way about it. Certainly we cannot surrender the mystical element of our faith whereby we realize that in communion with Christ we are in immediate touch with One whose spirit is free from all earthly limitations and can enter as the life-giving principle into the souls of men in all conditions and in all ages; but still less can we surrender the historical element which gives content and meaning to the experience of union with the Eternal Christ. As Professor D. S. Cairns has said: "The mysticism of Christianity presupposes the historical revelation,"¹⁷ and it is that background and basis in history that distinguishes Christian mysticism from the inward union with the Divine which we find in pantheistic religions of all kinds. It was because Docetism cut the connexion between the experience of communion with the Living Lord and the fact of Christ's appearing in history as true man, that the Church saw in it the fatal heresy which robbed Christianity of its essential content as a religion of redemption. For its power to redeem men resides in the fact that the God with whom we have fellowship as the personal source of life from which our lives are fed is known to us as One who for us men and for our salvation manifested His holy will and love in "the man Christ Jesus."

The prevalence of docetic views explains in part at least

why the Cross has so slight a place given to it in the Christian thought of the second century. References to it are comparatively frequent: the prominence given to it in the Gospel tradition made it impossible for writers to ignore it; but there is nowhere even an echo of the great words of St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Saviour's death is no longer regarded as the amazing exhibition of the love of God in its passion for man's redemption. Almost incredible as it may seem, the sacrifice of Christ which caused the early believers to break into doxology (Rev. i. 5, etc.) was a fact that brought discomfort to many second-century Christians and led them to explain it in the strangest ways. Jewish and pagan influences had made of the Cross a stumbling-block even for Christians. Both to Jew and Gnostic it was a preposterous thought that a Divine Being should suffer, but when they were confronted with the Cross they naturally drew different conclusions. The Jew admitted the suffering, but denied the divinity of Christ; the Gnostic admitted His divinity, but denied the reality of His suffering. Thus beat upon from two sides, Christian thought about the death of Jesus became timid and apologetic; docetic conceptions of it received a welcome, and where the reality of the suffering was not denied, the difficulties which men felt with regard to it were overcome by pointing out that it had been predicted in Old Testament prophecy. This failure to appreciate the evangelic significance and value of our Lord's sacrifice is emphasized by Origen's suggestion that the preaching of the Cross was a doctrine for the spiritually immature.¹⁸

The doctrinal tendencies whose influence we have briefly sketched, with their indifference to the facts of history and their obscuration or denial of Christ's true humanity, had a result, the importance of which for the whole future of Christianity cannot be overestimated. They led the Church to

attach a new value to the apostolic "memoirs" in which the life and teaching of our Lord were set forth. There are plain indications that very early in the second century the peril of docetic views was causing serious concern to Christian teachers. The Fourth Gospel shows the way in which the peril was faced. The writer of it had a deep appreciation of the truth which Docetism was reaching after; to him the Christ of the Church's worship was the Eternal Word, essentially divine, the uncreated Son who was in the beginning with God, and who in virtue of His divine nature was raised above all temporal relations, the omnipresent Lord and Giver of life, of whose fulness all who were in fellowship with Him had received; but what gives the Fourth Gospel significance is the fact which the evangelist sets in the forefront, that this Divine Being of whose indwelling he was conscious had entered the world and lived a life under human conditions, and had through that life revealed the Father and become the light and life of men. St. John's Gospel was early characterized as "the spiritual Gospel," but its most striking and significant feature, when it is considered in the context of contemporary thought, is that in it the Christ of spiritual experience is shown to have been a human being of flesh and blood, who really lived and suffered before He assumed again the heavenly glory and the universal influence which were His from the foundation of the world.¹⁹ Docetism was answered by an appeal to history; hence the supreme importance which the Gospels that preserved the record of Christ's earthly ministry and death came to have in the estimation of the Church. Against all docetic tendencies whatsoever, the Church opposed the facts of the life of Jesus which were vouched for by apostolic testimony. The process by which our present Gospels reached their commanding position as authoritative Scripture is obscure, but it is clear (to use Burkitt's words) that they "would never have become the official charters of

the Church but for the theological necessity of insisting upon the true human nature of our Lord." ²⁰ For this priceless possession the Church is indebted to the reaction against the theorizings of men who interpreted Christianity as faith in a transcendental Christ cut adrift from any connexion with historical actualities.

It is with Gospels other than those which the Church treasures as the authoritative documents of its faith that we have to do in the next four chapters. They had their origin at a time before the Gospel canon was fixed ; but without exception they presuppose a knowledge of the canonical writings, or of some of them, and are in large measure dependent on them. The remaining part of this introductory chapter may be devoted to showing briefly under what influences and by what methods they came into existence.

It is obvious that the primary motive which led to the writing of the later Gospels was a feeling of dissatisfaction with those which were already known, or in some cases where to suggest dissatisfaction would be to put the matter too strongly, a feeling that the existing Gospel narrative required to be supplemented. This motive operated even within the limits of the Gospels now in the canon. St. Luke states explicitly that many before him had set their hand to the task of narrating the established facts of the Christian faith, and the reason which induced him to write his Gospel was a conviction that he was in a position to add something of importance to the work of his predecessors. In using the word ἐπεχείρησαν (" have taken in hand ") with regard to the writing of the earlier evangelic records, he did not mean to suggest any disparagement of their worth ; but as they were not completely satisfactory to him, he mentioned the many previous " attempts " to justify his action in doing what others had endeavoured to do. ²¹ The writing of the First and Fourth Gospels was due to the same

feeling. Each writer as he went to work freely availed himself of the material which lay before him in the writings of his predecessors, but guided by his own definite aims he had no hesitation in remodelling it or adding to it or exhibiting it from a new point of view, so that his book might be most suitable for the religious edification of its readers. The uncanonical Gospels owed their origin to the same practical consideration. They were designed to serve the interests of faith in its controversy with various forms of unbelief, or to answer the special needs of some Christian community which looked at the evangelic tradition from its own angle and saw in Christ what others had not seen ; and the peculiarities which they exhibited indicated wherein the earlier writings had proved unsatisfactory. Thus many Gospels arose, each in its own way reflecting the religious interests of its readers and the conceptions which they had formed of the person and ministry of Christ.

In some cases the existing Gospels were felt to be so inadequate that new narratives were written which had almost nothing in common with them. This was what frequently happened in Gnostic circles, where there was an acute sense of the imperfection, from their point of view, of the ordinary Christian tradition. The story of Jesus, as recorded in the various Gospels current in the Church, was in the eyes of the Gnostics merely a shadow-picture of reality suitable to the comprehension of the spiritually unenlightened. The true meaning of Christ's life and teaching had been made known in secret revelations given by the Risen Lord to chosen ones among His disciples. St. Luke states in the Acts of the Apostles that Jesus after He was risen from the dead spoke of "the things concerning the kingdom of God" (ch. i. 3) ; accordingly we find that Gnostics issued Gospels dealing with the post-resurrection teaching of our Lord, in which they set forth their own peculiar doctrines. Very little of this esoteric literature belong-

ing to the second century has survived, but the later writing *Pistis Sophia* gives us an idea of its general character. We shall see in a subsequent chapter that literature of this kind was not confined to Gnostics. The thought of a secret tradition found its way into the minds of the orthodox; Tertullian, Clement, and Origen firmly believed in it, and even to-day there are theologians who hold that the apostolic doctrines which seem to show a departure from the preaching of Jesus and all the regulations for the true order of Church government were derived from the private instruction given to His followers by the Risen Lord.²²

It was natural that writers who desired perfect liberty in the composition of their peculiar Gospels should have been attracted by the post-resurrection period in our Lord's life. There was no tradition to restrain their fancy; a free field was left for the secret revelations which they claimed to have received. Considerations of the same kind may have led to the writing of Gospels of the Infancy and Childhood. In their production it is probable that the motive of curiosity played some part; when the human life of Jesus came into the focus of interest, it is just what one might have expected that Christians would be eager to obtain some information about the earthly antecedents and childhood of their Lord which the existing Gospels passed over almost in silence. But curiosity in itself is not a sufficient explanation of this type of Gospel. The interest in the humanity of Jesus in the second century was almost entirely due to dogmatic considerations, and apart from these it is exceedingly doubtful whether Childhood Gospels would ever have been written. But whatever motives were at work, from the very nature of the case these Gospels, like those dealing with the post-resurrection period, were largely independent of the common evangelic tradition.

For the most part, however, the Gospels already widely

accepted in the Church were used in the composition of the later Gospels. They had as yet acquired no sacrosanct character, and writers who wished to make use of the material which they contained had no scruples about rearranging and altering and adapting it for their own purposes. The simplest method of dealing with a Church Gospel was that adopted by Marcion, who used St. Luke as the evangelic narrative with which he was most in sympathy, and made it the vehicle of his own views by omitting all that was not in harmony with them. In this he differed from some other Gnostics, who made no change in the text of the Gospels in common use, but contented themselves with reading into them their own peculiar doctrines by the employment of the method of allegory. But in general, apart from those writings which supplemented the evangelic narrative by the addition of material altogether new, the uncanonical Gospels of which we can speak with most confidence were free adaptations of those which had won their way to popular favour in different parts of the Church. They held somewhat closely to the accepted tradition, and modified it in details with the object of conforming it to the ethical and doctrinal conceptions in the mind of the writers. Apologetic motives of various kinds also came into play, and changes were made which were designed to meet objections that were raised by the opponents of Christianity. All this, of course, involved some manipulation of the facts given in the evangelic tradition, and, what was still more objectionable, led to the invention of fictitious details; but that did not appear serious to those who were concerned, not with the data of history as bare objective facts, but with their interpretation of them. If the convictions of faith seemed to require new narratives to support them, there was no hesitation in supplying them. It is difficult for us to appreciate this way of dealing with history, but it was characteristic of the thought of the age. As Dr. Percy Gardner

says : " The modern scientific demand for facts, to have things depicted as they are, would have been strange to the ancients ; they were more concerned with ideals than with facts." ²³ Thus those who wrote of Jesus looked at the events of His life in the light of their actual experiences and needs, and the conceptions which dominated their thinking and their conduct coloured their story.

This method of dealing with history was full of peril, and the uncanonical Gospels and Acts reveal how far astray men went in their imaginative reading of the past. Their fault, however, was not that they allowed their doctrinal conceptions and apologetic considerations to influence their presentation of Jesus and the apostles—that was inevitable, but that they so often lost all touch with historical reality. In the transmission of the Gospel tradition it was in the nature of things that there should be a mingling of convictions and the facts on which they were based. The meaning of a great personality like that of Jesus could not be set forth without interpretation, and that involved to some extent at least the reading into the facts of the convictions of those who had come under its spell. That is true of the Gospels which we have in the New Testament. They are not mere chronicles, setting down what any one might have seen or heard in the presence of Jesus ; they are narratives of His deeds and sayings written in the atmosphere of faith which He had evoked, and it was impossible to keep out of the story what men had found Him to be. That we see Jesus in the Gospels through Christian eyes is, however, no ground for scepticism as to the truth of the picture ; it is rather an assurance that we are face to face with essential facts. What separates the canonical Gospels from those which the Church rejected is not the fact that they were entirely free from the influences which in the uncanonical Gospels led to the distortion or misconception of the data of history and to the

invention of legends, but the fact that they were written by men who stood closer to the historic Jesus and were more conscious that in Him something new and wonderful had come to pass by which their lives had been transformed. That fact, while it may not have excluded elements in the Gospel record which were due to the writer's point of view and to the interests of the Christian mission, did ensure that the figure of Jesus as He actually lived did not disappear in a cloudland of fancy, but was faithfully depicted by those who revered Him as Saviour and Lord. Our conviction, that in the Gospels we are brought close to the heart of historical reality, is confirmed, not only by the character and teaching of Jesus as presented to us, which in their sublimity and inner harmony were beyond the power of any to invent, but also by the fact that in every age men, reading the Gospels, have through Jesus been brought into a new relationship with God and have found in Him "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

CHAPTER II.

JEWISH-CHRISTIAN GOSPELS.

THE questions which gather round the Gospels current in Jewish-Christian circles in the early Church present an extremely tangled problem, and it cannot be claimed that the labours of successive generations of scholars have been successful in providing a generally accepted solution. The notices of patristic writers in this field are very confusing—a fact which occasions no surprise when we consider that some of them speak of Gospels which they had never seen ; and unfortunately the Gospels themselves offer us little help in solving difficulties, for the portions which have survived form a rather meagre collection of disconnected fragments. When one attempts to explore the evidence and to follow the arguments of scholars who seek to bring order out of confusion, one has the unhappy and bewildered feeling of being drawn into a maze out of which there is little hope of ever emerging.

Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome all speak of a “ Gospel according to the Hebrews,” and although it is clear that all these writers do not refer to the same work, it is impossible to say with certainty how many writings are designated by that single name. Two possibilities have to be borne in mind ; either the title “ The Gospel according to the Hebrews ” belonged by right only to one work and was erroneously transferred to others, or the title was a generic designation applied to different writings, which had little in

common but their currency among Christians who were either of Hebrew origin or belonged to a Syriac-speaking community. It is difficult to decide which of these alternative views should be adopted, but there is an increasing disposition among scholars to favour the latter. In any case two Gospels of the Jewish-Christian class can be clearly distinguished, namely, that in use among the orthodox Nazarenes of northern Syria of which Jerome repeatedly speaks, and that current among the Gnosticizing Ebionites to the east of the Jordan of which Epiphanius has preserved some fragments. Until quite recently critical opinion assumed, perhaps too hastily, that these were the only Jewish-Christian Gospels of which we have extant remains, and that Jerome's Nazarene Gospel was identical with the "Gospel of the Hebrews" which Clement and Origen quoted and to which Eusebius made reference. That assumption has now been challenged, and as the result of the investigations of Schmidtke²⁴ and Waitz²⁵ there are probably not a few scholars who would maintain with considerable confidence that the Alexandrian Gospel of Clement and Origen was an entirely different writing from the Nazarene Gospel. It is doubtful whether with our available material we can hope to see the existing differences of opinion finally resolved; certainly at present there is no room for dogmatism; I can only express the view to which I have come with some hesitation, that a good case has been made out for assuming the existence of three separate Jewish-Christian Gospels—the Alexandrian, the Nazarene, and the Ebionite.

Before we proceed to the discussion of the Gospels, it may be desirable to have in mind some facts with regard to the Jewish believers in Christ. It is well known that there were in the early Church parties of Jewish Christians with divergent views, the point of difference being either their conception of the value to be attached to the ancient Jewish law or their

view of the person of Jesus Christ. It was with reference to the Law that the first divergence of opinion arose. To begin with, the members of the primitive Jewish-Christian communities in Palestine were not conscious of any problem thrown up by the Law of their fathers. They continued to observe it and to conform in every particular to the national customs which distinguished the Jew from men of another race. They kept the Sabbath, they frequented the synagogues, they took part in the Temple worship, and in the external ordering of their lives there was almost nothing to mark them off from the Jews who had not accepted Christ. They were still members of the religious community of Judaism and were distinguished from their neighbours, not by anything which they rejected, but by their added faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and by the new ties and observances of brotherhood in which that faith expressed itself. It was only when St. Paul in his Gentile mission admitted men and women to the Church on the ground of faith in Christ alone that the question of the attitude of Christians to the Law created difficulty and caused no little heart-burning among Jewish believers. The antagonism which was implicit from the first between Judaism and Christianity was through the Pauline mission brought clearly into the light, and in the controversy which ensued about the admission of Gentiles into the Christian community there appeared the cleavage of opinion which perpetuated itself in Jewish Christianity for many generations to come. Apart from the Hellenistic Jews, who on becoming Christians were more readily disposed to accept the radical change of attitude to the Law involved in the Pauline Gospel, the Jewish Christians for the most part clung to their ancient religious inheritance, though not in every case for the same reason. On the one hand, there were those like the Apostle Peter who in principle were at one with St. Paul but who nevertheless, strongly influenced by national

sentiment and the desire to emphasize their unity with the Old Testament Church, observed the ordinances of the Jewish Law, without, however, regarding these as binding on non-Jews who accepted Christianity ; and, on the other hand, there was the stricter and more conservative party, who not only lived in accordance with the Law themselves, but believed that it was incumbent on all Christians to do the same. This divergence of opinion, as we learn from Justin (*Dial.* 47), persisted even after the Jewish nation had been destroyed and the Palestinian Christians had been finally scattered abroad as the result of the edict of Hadrian in the fourth decade of the second century.

But in the meantime another line of cleavage had appeared. Jewish Christians were divided, not only in their opinion about the necessity of the Law for salvation, but in their views about the person of Christ, some believing that He was born as other men, *ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων* (Justin, *Dial.* 48), others recognizing the supernatural birth.²⁶ We have no means of knowing how this line of division was related to the other, but it is not perhaps too bold to assume that those who took a "poor" view of our Lord's person were chiefly confined to the stricter party, while those who were more liberal in their attitude to the Law were Christologically orthodox. If this be the case, we may conclude that at the middle of the second century, and for some considerable time before, there were two well marked classes of Jewish Christians--the one maintaining the traditional observance of the Law but entirely catholic in their sympathies and beliefs and eager to enter into fellowship with members of the Great Church, the other standing apart from the Church in their legalistic intolerance and in their denial of the supernatural origin of Jesus. In this latter class, divorced as they were from catholic influences, there would be a natural tendency to depart still farther from the

faith of the Church, and we find that this actually happened, some adopting views of Essene or Gnostic origin.

It goes without saying that Jewish Christians who differed so widely from one another on essential points of doctrine could not have made use of the same Gospel in their public worship. We know as a matter of fact that they did not, but it is probable that in every case the different Gospels which they prepared to suit their own views had as their basis canonical Matthew, which more than any other of the Church Gospels had an atmosphere congenial to Christians of Jewish birth.

One Jewish-Christian Gospel stands out quite unmistakably—the GOSPEL OF THE EBIONITES, for our knowledge of which we are indebted to Epiphanius. Although the information given by Epiphanius is often far from trustworthy, we may accept in its broad outlines his account of the two parties of Jewish Christians which existed in his own day—the *Nazoræans*, who differed from the Church at large in their adherence to the Jewish Law and national customs but were in other respects entirely orthodox, and the *Ebionites*, who not only were doctrinally heterodox, but with all their attachment to the Law had adopted a critical attitude to the Old Testament and in particular were antagonistic to its sacrificial system. It was among the latter, who dwelt in communities in the neighbourhood of Pella, to the east of the Jordan, that the Gospel with which we are now concerned was current. We are probably correct in regarding these Ebionites of Gnosticizing tendency as the descendants of the Palestinian Christians who fled to Pella before the destruction of Jerusalem; and that calamitous event, viewed as a Divine judgment on the Jews for their unbelief, together with the influence of syncretistic currents of thought to which in their isolation from other Christian communities they were more seriously exposed, may account for the peculiar

doctrines which they came to hold. In any case we know that they not only denied the supernatural birth of Jesus, but rejected the Old Testament prophets and St. Paul, and had an abhorrence of all bloody sacrifices and the eating of flesh. Their Gospel, as Epiphanius who knew it states, was the Gospel of Matthew in an incomplete and mutilated form²⁷ and was called by them "according to the Hebrews"—and that correctly, as Epiphanius adds, "because Matthew alone composed in the New Testament the exposition and preaching of the Gospel in Hebrew and in Hebrew characters" (*Hær.* 30. 3). The explanation given by Epiphanius of the title is, of course, derived from the commonly accepted but erroneous tradition that canonical Matthew was written originally in Hebrew, but apart from that the statement that the Ebionites called their Gospel "according to the Hebrews" or "the Hebrew Gospel," is open to question. A title of that kind would most naturally have been given, if it was given at all, to the Gospel of the Ebionites by outsiders, although Waitz, who accepts the statement of Epiphanius as accurate, maintains that, since the Ebionites regarded themselves as the true Hebrews, nothing was more natural than that they should have called their Gospel "the Hebrew Gospel," even although (as was the case) it was originally written in Greek.²⁸ But be that as it may, the fragments which have been preserved bear out the statement of Epiphanius that the Ebionite Gospel was a "falsified and mutilated" edition of Matthew.

Critical opinion is practically agreed that the Gospel of the Ebionites is identical with the Gospel mentioned by Origen (*Hom. in Luc.* 1) as inscribed "The Gospel of the Twelve (Apostles)," and included by him among the uninspired "attempts" to narrate the evangelic facts.²⁹ This identification is based mainly on two facts. (1) In a passage referring to the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" in use among the

Nazarenes, Jerome mentions two alternative designations by which it was known, one of these being "according to the Apostles" (*contra Pelag.* 3. 2). In this statement Jerome is generally recognized to be mistaken. But one thing is clear, that the error into which he fell would have been impossible if the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles had not been known to belong to the class of Jewish-Christian Gospels with some relation to St. Matthew. (2) One of the fragments of the Gospel of the Ebionites preserved by Epiphanius gives us the information that before His baptism Jesus chose the twelve apostles "to be a testimony to Israel." The inference is justified that the passage (see below, II.) was meant to indicate the authorities by whom the Gospel was guaranteed, and that Matthew, who is directly addressed by Jesus, was thus marked out as the actual author of the Gospel, writing in the name of the Twelve. With some confidence, accordingly, we may say that the name by which the Ebionite Gospel was originally known was "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles."

The fragments of the Gospel may be given in full in the context in which they occur in Epiphanius.

I. *Hær.* 30. 13.—"The beginning of the Gospel used by them is as follows: *It came to pass in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, that John came baptizing with a baptism of repentance in the river Jordan; he was said to be of the race of Aaron the priest, the son of Zechariah and Elisabeth. And all went out to him.*" Similarly *Hær.* 30. 14: "They cut away the genealogies from Matthew and then make the beginning, as was stated above, in this manner: *It came to pass in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, when Caiaphas was high priest, that there came a man named John, baptizing with a baptism of repentance in the river Jordan.*"

II. *Hær.* 30. 13.—"Now in the Gospel used by them called 'according to Matthew,' which is not complete and full but

falsified and mutilated—they call it the Hebrew Gospel—it is stated : *There was a man named Jesus, and He was about thirty years old, and He called us. And when He came to Capernaum, He entered into the house of Simon who was surnamed Peter, and having opened His mouth He said, When I was passing along the shore of the Lake of Tiberias, I chose John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and Simon and Andrew and Thaddæus and Simon the zealot and Judas Iscariot, and thee, Matthew, I called when thou wast sitting at the receipt of custom, and thou didst follow Me. You then I wish to be twelve apostles for a testimony to Israel.*

“And John was baptizing, and Pharisees came out to him and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. And John had a garment of camel’s hair and a girdle of leather round his loins. And his food (the Gospel says) was wild honey which had the taste of manna, like a honey-cake (ἐγκρίς) in oil.”

III. *Hær.* 30. 13 (in the text of Epiphanius following I.).—*“And after the mention of many things [the contents of II.] it states : When the people were baptized, Jesus also came and was baptized by John. And when He came up from the water, the heavens were opened and He saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending and entering into Him. And a voice came from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased. And again, To-day I have begotten Thee.*

“And immediately there shone round about the place a great light. When John saw it (the Gospel says) he said to Him, Who art Thou, Lord ? and again a voice from heaven spoke to him, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Thereupon (says the Gospel) John fell down at His feet and said, I pray Thee, Lord, do Thou baptize me. And He forbade him, saying, Let things be as they are ; thus it is fitting that all things should be fulfilled.”

IV. *Hær.* 30. 16.—*“They declare that He was not begotten of God the Father but created, as one of the archangels and*

yet in a manner more remarkable, that He is the Lord both of angels and of all things made by the Almighty, and that He came and taught, as the so-called Gospel in use among them relates : *I came to abolish sacrifices, and unless ye cease from sacrificing, the wrath shall not cease from you.*"

V. *Hær.* 30. 14.—"And again they deny that He is a man, actually maintaining this from the word which the Saviour spoke (when the message was brought to Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without), *Who is My mother and brethren? and stretching out His hand towards the disciples, He said, These are My sisters and mother and brothers who do the commandments of My Father.*"

VI. *Hær.* 30. 22.—"They, putting away from them obedience to the truth, have changed the saying . . . and have made the disciples say : *Where wilt Thou that we should prepare the passover for Thee to eat?* and have actually made Him say, *I have not desired to eat this Passover flesh with you.*"

The Jewish-Christian character of the Gospel is clearly indicated by several details in the foregoing extracts. The Ebionites by whom the Gospel was used regarded themselves as the true Israel, and looked on the mission of Jesus as intended for the adherents of the Jewish faith. The twelve apostles were chosen "for a testimony to Israel"; and as one may gather from a passage in Origen,³⁰ the Ebionites interpreted the saying of Jesus in Matt. xv. 24 ("I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel") as conclusive evidence that the Gospel was meant for Israel after the flesh. Moreover, as emphasizing the close connexion between Judaism and Christianity, the baptism of John, which was regarded as of fundamental importance as the occasion for the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus to fit Him for His mission, was, according to this Gospel, recognized by the official representatives of the older faith; the Pharisees not only came to John's

baptism as canonical Matthew states (iii. 7), but they were themselves baptized. A further indication of the Jewish-Christian standpoint is probably to be found in the slight change of Matt. xii. 50 (in V.), where instead of "the will" (θέλημα) we read "the commandments (θελήματα) of My Father," suggesting that Christianity was legalistically conceived as a new code of moral injunctions.

The conception of the person of Jesus found in the Gospel is also in harmony with the views which we know to have been entertained by Ebionites of the left wing. There is no narrative of the Virgin Birth; the genealogies, as Epiphanius states, are cut away, manifestly because the origin of Jesus was a matter of no importance; and the manner in which He is introduced into the narrative ("a certain man named Jesus") shows that before His baptism He was regarded as ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος, with no divine dignity attaching to Him. It was only through the entering of the Holy Spirit into Him after He had been baptized by John, that He became the Son of God ("this day have I begotten Thee"). It naturally followed from this view of Jesus that no problem was raised by His baptism. There was no hesitation on His part, such as we find in the Nazarene Gospel, in submitting to a baptism of repentance; and John did not, to begin with, recognize in Jesus any higher than human dignity to make him reluctant to baptize Him (as in Matt. iii. 14). / Rather we must assume that it was the opinion of the Ebionites that the baptism of Jesus was necessary to make His soul a pure receptacle for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by which He received the endowment for His mission. From the account of Epiphanius we gather that the entrance of the Holy Spirit into Jesus was conceived, in harmony with a common Gnostic view, as the union of the heavenly Christ with the man Jesus. / It is with reference to this heavenly being that the extracts IV. and V.

are to be understood, where it is stated, on the one hand, that He was not begotten but created like one of the archangels; and, on the other, that He was not a man. The saying of Jesus recorded in the canonical Gospels about His mother and brethren was interpreted as the utterance of the heavenly Christ who could own no family kinship with any earthborn creatures (V.). It was, moreover, the heavenly Christ dwelling in Jesus who as Lord of all created things had authority to abrogate the ordinances of the ancient Jewish law (IV.). From all this it is plain that the man Jesus in Himself had no significance for Ebionite thought; what was significant was the new composite personality which came into existence when the Holy Spirit or heavenly Christ entered into Jesus. [We have in this conception, it should be noted, something totally different from a merely humanitarian estimate of our Lord—a way of regarding Him which was altogether foreign to early Christian thought; it was, in fact, an attempt to do justice to the two elements of Christian faith, on which insistence was laid by all who did not hold Docetic views, that the Lord whom men worshipped in Jesus Christ was truly human and truly divine. The purely humanitarian view of Jesus before His baptism was an assertion of the true humanity, while the entrance of the Holy Spirit into Him emphasized the true divine dignity of the Saviour. It was no doubt a crude conception, and the Church as a whole followed the lead of the Fourth Gospel with its “pre-existent” Christology and doctrine of Incarnation, but we ought to recognize that it was an earnest attempt to express the universal Christian faith in the divine nature of the Saviour who was truly man among men.

As the Gospel clearly shows, the Gnosticizing Ebionites were vegetarians, and in this practice of abstaining from animal food they were influenced, if Epiphanius is to be trusted (*Hær.* 30. 15), by their abhorrence of sexual intercourse by

which animals were brought into existence. Their vegetarian views are reflected in two passages in the fragments: (1) the Baptist's food is not, as stated in Mark i. 6, Matt. iii. 4, "locusts and wild honey," but "wild honey whose taste was the taste of manna, like a honey-cake dipped in oil" (II.);³¹ (2) by the insertion of the word "flesh" (*κρέας*) into the Lucan text (ch. xxii. 15), and by changing the sentence into a question which implied a negative answer, the author represented Jesus as being averse to the eating of animal food ("Have I, think you, really desired to eat this Passover flesh with you?"—VI.). The authority of Jesus was also invoked by the Ebionites in favour of their repudiation of animal sacrifices, for His aim, as the Gospel explicitly states in words put into Jesus' mouth, was to abolish offerings of that kind and to declare that so far from their being pleasing to God they exposed those who offered them to the Divine wrath (IV.). In this rejection of animal sacrifice the Ebionites were possibly influenced by the Essenes,³² with whom in other respects (daily lustrations, strict sabbatarianism, and the like) they appear to have been in agreement.

The Gospel of the Ebionites shows unmistakably that it was dependent on the Gospels which were in common use in the Church. Its greatest affinity is with St. Matthew, and the fact that in the narrative, in which Jesus reminds the Twelve Apostles of their call "to be a testimony to Israel," Matthew is singled out and directly addressed is a clear indication that the Ebionites wished their Gospel to be regarded as the true Gospel of Matthew, written by that apostle who had behind him the undivided testimony of the Twelve. That the author, however, did not use St. Matthew alone is manifest when we read fragments I. and VI. In the former of these two passages the chronological notice with reference to the appearance of the Baptist ("in the days of Herod the king of Judæa") is taken from Luke i. 5, where it marks the time

of John's birth and not the beginning of his ministry ; and in the latter, the reference is to Luke xxii. 15—a distinctively Lucan passage. Another case of borrowing from Luke will be noticed below in the account of the baptism of Jesus.³³ But even more important than the fact of the use of the First and Third Gospels is the author's method of using them. He had no scruples in altering the text before him and in rearranging the narrative to attain the object which he had in view. His most glaring changes are in the passages in which his vegetarian and anti-sacrificial doctrines find expression. "Locusts" (*ἀκρίδες*) was for him impossible as a part of the Baptist's diet, and in omitting this he indulged in the conceit of stating that the wild honey which John ate had "the taste of manna, like a cake (*ἐγκρίς*) in oil"³⁴—a clear proof that the Ebionite Gospel, whether it was called the "Hebrew" Gospel or not, was originally written in Greek. Further, as has been already noted, St. Luke's record of the intense desire of Jesus to eat the Passover with His disciples is changed into the opposite sense by the insertion of a negative (*μή*).³⁵ The Matthæan passage: "Think not that I came to destroy the law" appears in the Ebionite Gospel as "I came to destroy sacrifices." The significance of the verbal change of *θελήματα* for *θέλημα* in Matt. xii. 50 has already been noted. Among other changes to be accounted for by the various "tendencies" of the Gospel the following may be mentioned. The Twelve are chosen to be apostles before the baptism of Jesus, apparently to secure their testimony to the extraordinary events which happened at the baptism ; the Pharisees, who according to the account in Matt. iii. 7 were denounced by John as "a generation of vipers," are baptized ; the Holy Spirit which descended on Jesus in the form of a dove (so all the Synoptists) enters into Him—an obvious addition to indicate the union of the heavenly Christ with the man Jesus. The narrative

of the baptism of Jesus is a conflate account with three utterances of the heavenly voice, details both from the First and from the Third Gospel being incorporated ; but the most remarkable feature of it is that, unlike the account given in St. Matthew, the Baptist did not at first recognize any peculiar dignity in Jesus and baptized Him without hesitation, and that only then did he become aware that Jesus was no ordinary penitent when a bright light shone forth after His baptism. This representation was, of course, demanded by the author's conception of Jesus ; but the influence of St. Matthew's account, nevertheless, led him to substitute for the Baptist's remonstrance and Jesus' words of reassurance (Matt. iii. 14 f.) a somewhat similar conversation after the baptism, in which the answer of Jesus ("let matters rest ; thus it is fitting that all things should be fulfilled ") has no real meaning.

In connexion with the baptism of Jesus, the most interesting detail not recorded in the canonical Gospels is the appearance of a great light. How this tradition arose we cannot determine. Possibly it was suggested by the recorded words of the Baptist, that the coming Messiah would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. iii. 11 ; Luke iii. 16) ; or it may have been due to the realistic embodiment of the idea that at the baptism the glory of the Son of God, the Light of the world, was made manifest. But be this as it may, the tradition received some currency especially in the East, and testimony is borne to it in several early Christian writings. Justin, a native of Palestine, states (*Dial.* 88) that "when Jesus went down to the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan" ; Tatian embodied the detail in the *Diatessaron* ; and as we learn from the pseudo-Cyprianic tractate *De rebaptismate*, 17, the following words occurred in the *Preaching of Paul* : "When Jesus was being baptized, a fire was seen above the water." It is interesting also to note that in two MSS. containing the

old Latin translation of the Gospels, Codex Vercellensis and Codex Sangermanensis (g¹), this is found after Matt. iii. 15 :
“ And when Jesus was being baptized, a great light shone from the water, so that all who were assembled were afraid.” ³⁶

From the account which has been given of the Gospel of the Ebionites, it is not difficult to appraise its worth. It is a “ tendency-writing ” of the most glaring description. Save possibly for some traditions, like that about the light at the baptism of Jesus, the author had no other material at his disposal than that contained in the canonical Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. These Gospels he treated with the utmost freedom, not scrupling to make very material changes in the interest of the doctrines which he was concerned to maintain and propagate. There is no reason to question the justice of the description of Epiphanius, that the Gospel was a “ falsified and mutilated ” Matthew, although it is apparent from the extant fragments that the author introduced matter from the Third Gospel as well. It was probably the writing of which Irenæus spoke from report when he said of the Ebionites : “ they use that Gospel alone which is according to Matthew and repudiate the Apostle Paul, saying that he was an apostate from the Law ” (*Hær.* i. 26. 2). That it was written comparatively early rather than late in the second century, may be inferred from the extraordinary freedom with which the Gospels in common use were treated ; these were as yet far from occupying the sacrosanct position which they held in the Church towards the end of the century.

We pass now to the consideration of the other Gospels (or Gospel) current among the more orthodox Jewish Christians. It is at this point that we are confronted with the difficulty, to which reference was made at the beginning of the chapter, that we cannot say with certainty whether there were two such Gospels or only one. The Alexandrian Fathers, Clement and

Origen, quote from a "Gospel according to the Hebrews," and later Jerome gives a number of extracts from a Gospel in use among the Nazarenes in Syria, also called by him "the Gospel according to the Hebrews." The question at issue is whether these Gospels are identical or not. Within the limits set by the aim of these studies, it is impossible to enter on a detailed discussion of the intricate problem, but it may be desirable to see what the problem is by reviewing the chief references to the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" in early Church writers.

Clement of Alexandria, at the beginning of the third century, is the first to quote from "the Gospel according to the Hebrews." In a passage in the second book of the *Stromateis* he refers to the Platonic idea that wonder is the beginning of true knowledge, and he adduces in support of this a saying from that Gospel. The passage runs: "To wonder at things is the beginning of (truth), as Plato says in the *Theætetus*,³⁷ and likewise Matthias in the *Traditions* when he exhorts us, 'Wonder at the things before thee,' suggesting that this is the first step to further knowledge; just as it is written in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 'He that wonders shall reign, and he that reigns shall rest'" (*Strom.* ii. 9. 45). The same saying is quoted a second time by Clement in an extended form, but without the mention of the source from which he derived it: "He who seeks shall not cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall be astonished, and being astonished he shall reign, and reigning he shall rest" (*Strom.* v. 14. 96). In this form the saying agrees almost verbally with one of the Oxyrhynchus sayings discovered in 1903. We are not at the moment concerned with the meaning of the passage cited; what is important to note is that Clement introduces it by using the technical word employed when one is quoting Scripture, "it is written" (*γράφεται*). As the Gospel canon may be said to have been definitely fixed in Clement's time, his use of this formula shows that the Gospel

according to the Hebrews, although excluded from the canon, stood just outside in a position of high authority.

In Origen there are two (or possibly three) references to the Gospel. In his commentary on John (tom. ii. 63), where he is expounding the view that the Holy Spirit came into being through the Word of God, we read: "But if any one admits *the Gospel according to the Hebrews*, where the Saviour Himself says, 'Just now my mother, the Holy Spirit, took me by one of my hairs and carried me away to the great mountain Tabor,' he will raise the fresh difficulty how the Holy Spirit which had being through the Word can be the mother of Christ. It is not difficult to explain this to him." Then the explanation follows, that as he who does God's will is Christ's brother and sister and mother, the Holy Spirit who fulfils the Divine will may fitly be named the mother of Christ. The same remarkable saying is quoted again by Origen in his Homilies on Jeremiah (xv. 4) with a similar reservation, "if any one accepts. . . ." Further, in the Latin version of Origen's commentary on Matthew xix. 16 ff. we read: "It is written (*scriptum est*—the formula for a quotation from Scripture) in a certain Gospel which is called 'according to the Hebrews,' if, that is to say, any one is disposed to accept it not as authoritative but as elucidating the question before us . . ."—then follows a version of the story of the Rich Young Ruler. The whole passage is absent from the Greek text of Origen and accordingly may not be authentic; if this be the case, as seems most probable, we have Origen's testimony only to *one* saying from the Gospel which he names 'according to the Hebrews.' But his reference to that saying, which from his double quotation of it we can see had greatly interested him, indicates how highly the Gospel was esteemed. It was clearly regarded as authoritative by some whom Origen was addressing, and he himself was so little disposed to challenge that opinion and so much impressed by

the importance of the Gospel, that he felt it necessary to guard the views which he held on the Holy Spirit against any objection which might be urged from the passage which he quoted. As Origen states plainly in his Homily on Luke i. 1 that the Church recognized only our four Gospels, the attention which he paid to the Gospel according to the Hebrews reveals the high position which it held among Gospels not admitted to the canon; it was not included by him among those which he mentioned only to condemn as mere "attempts" to record the evangelic tradition.

Thus in Alexandria, in the first half of the third century we find that a Gospel bearing the name "according to the Hebrews" was held in extremely high favour, and was generally considered to speak with so large a measure of authority that Clement quoted it with the formula of Scripture, and Origen felt it incumbent on him to show that his opinions were not in conflict with it. It is unfortunate that in the extant writings of Clement and Origen there are so few allusions to a Gospel held in such respect. Nothing is told us of the *provenance* of the Gospel or of the community in which it was current. We may assume that it served the needs of Jewish Christians in Alexandria, and that its name was given by outsiders to mark that fact and to distinguish it from the Gospel in use among native Christians—the Gospel according to the Egyptians; but we have no information whether it was a Gospel written originally in Greek or translated from Aramaic, or whether it first saw the light in Egypt or elsewhere. The character of the saying quoted by Origen about the Holy Spirit, the mother of Christ, points, however, as we shall see, to Syria as its original home.

The next to refer to "the Gospel according to the Hebrews" is Eusebius in the first quarter of the fourth century. He speaks of it on several occasions, and what he has to say about

it confirms and adds something to the scanty information derived from the Alexandrian Fathers. To begin with, he bears clear witness to its high standing in the Church. Speaking in the *Ecclesiastical History* (iii. 25. 5) of the distinction which he had been obliged to draw between writings which were universally acknowledged as canonical and those which were disputed by some but recognized by most, he included the Gospel according to the Hebrews in the latter class. That is to say, it held a quasi-canonical position, quite apart from other Gospels which Eusebius had no hesitation in branding as heretical, such as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, and of Matthias. But, in the second place, Eusebius has something to tell us of the readers of the Gospel. In the passage to which we have referred he states that this much esteemed Gospel was the one which Jewish Christians most delighted to use, and somewhat later, in another section of his History, where he is describing the Ebionites and the two parties into which they were divided, he declares that it is the Gospel used to the exclusion of others by the more orthodox party which acknowledged the Virgin Birth (*H.E.* iii. 27. 4). I cannot find in these notices, as some do, the slightest suggestion that Eusebius was confusing two different Gospels. There is nothing inconsistent in his saying that a Gospel held in universal esteem was the favourite Gospel among Jewish Christians, and in his adding that it was the only one used by a particular party of Jewish believers who differed from Christians generally, not so much in doctrine as in their strict adherence to the Law of their fathers. Had the Ebionites in question been as unmistakably heretical as those who used the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, we could have said with certainty that they would not have used a Gospel which was unquestionably orthodox and acceptable to the Church at large. But Eusebius shows that their heresy, such as it was, was of a comparatively mild type; he expressly

distinguishes them from those Ebionites who believed that Jesus was born in the natural way, and that the Law was necessary for salvation. With the Church generally they accepted Christ's supernatural birth, although they denied His pre-existence; they observed the Lord's Day in memory of the Saviour's resurrection, although they kept the Sabbath also; what, in fact, separated them from the catholic fellowship was, on the showing of Eusebius, mainly their observance of Jewish religious customs and their regarding St. Paul as an apostate from the Law. That even Jewish Christians who were orthodox looked with suspicion on St. Paul we learn from the second century writing, the *Epistola Apostolorum*.³⁸ I think we may conclude with some confidence that the party among the Ebionites which Eusebius describes as using only the Gospel according to the Hebrews was not widely separated from the catholic Church.

We pass now to Jerome, who repeatedly speaks of "the Gospel according to the Hebrews" and gives quotations from it. Jerome, a native of a district which now forms part of Yugo-Slavia, spent many years of his life in the East, living for five years (374-379) as a hermit in the wilderness of Chalcis in northern Syria, and later settling in Bethlehem (386), where he founded monastic houses and lived for thirty-four years until his death in 420. During his stay in Syria he was in touch with the Jewish Christians of that region, and became acquainted with a Gospel used by them which he valued very highly and to which he made frequent allusions in his writings. From different passages, extending over a period of almost thirty years, we learn the following. The Gospel was in use among the Nazarenes, a body of Jewish Christians catholic in their sympathies, and Jerome was allowed to copy it by members of that community who lived in Berœa, the modern Aleppo. It was a Gospel written in the Aramaic language but in Hebrew

characters. At first Jerome was inclined to regard it as the Hebrew original of Matthew of which Papias had spoken, but later contented himself with saying that that opinion was held by very many. In any case he thought so highly of the Gospel that he translated it, in the early years of his residence at Bethlehem, into Greek and Latin; and to show that he was not alone in his estimation of it he mentioned that it was much used by Origen. He identified it, incorrectly, as we have seen, with the Gospel known as "according to the Apostles," but the name under which he most frequently referred to it was "the Gospel according to the Hebrews."

It is clear that in Jerome's opinion this Gospel which he found among the Nazarenes was worthy to be placed alongside those which the Church had canonized. He never gives the slightest indication that in his use of it he is relying on a Gospel which is of doubtful authority. That he felt impelled to translate it in order that it might have a wider circulation than it could have in Aramaic, and that he turned to it so frequently during a period of thirty years, gives signal proof of the reverence in which he held it. That is confirmed, if confirmation be needed, by the charge levelled at him by Theodore of Mopsuestia, that he was endeavouring to foist on the Church a fifth Gospel fabricated by himself.³⁹ When we consider that Jerome was even morbidly apprehensive lest any suspicion of heresy should be attached to him, we may regard it as certain that he saw nothing in the Gospel calculated to disturb the most orthodox.

After this review of the references to "the Gospel according to the Hebrews," one would say that a strong *prima facie* case had been made out for the identification of Jerome's Nazarene Gospel and the Gospel quoted by the Alexandrian Fathers and referred to by Eusebius. Both are described by the same name, although on that fact we are not entitled to base any argument. As has been already stated, different Jewish-

Christian Gospels might have been called "according to the Hebrews," and in any case it is obvious that Jerome, who was acquainted with the earlier writers, might have assumed, when the Nazarene Gospel came into his hands, that he had discovered the Gospel mentioned by them. That would have been all the more natural, if passages quoted by them were, as he declared, found by him in the Nazarene Gospel. But leaving the common title out of account, we find not a little to suggest that the Gospel of Clement, Origen, and Eusebius was the same as that so highly prized by Jerome. Both were of such a character that they were considered to have no mean authority, an authority little inferior to that of those in the canon, and both were in use among Jewish Christians with orthodox sympathies. When in addition to this we find that Jerome states (*de vir. illus.* 2) that the Gospel which he translated was often used by Origen; when, moreover, a saying quoted several times by Jerome from the Nazarene Gospel is seen to be the same as the striking saying twice quoted by Origen from "the Gospel according to the Hebrews," the inference would seem to be unassailable that both Gospels were identical. Until quite recently that was the universally accepted opinion.

But within the last few years this opinion has been challenged with much force and brilliancy by Schmidtke, who maintains the thesis that the Alexandrian Gospel and Jerome's Gospel of the Nazarenes are two totally different works. Into the details of Schmidtke's searching criticism of the older view it is impossible to enter. They include, to begin with, the discrediting of Jerome's testimony as to the use which Origen had made of the Nazarene Gospel. In Schmidtke's opinion Jerome is so utterly unreliable that no trust can be placed in anything which he says. Thus he is not to be believed when he states that he got from the Nazarenes a copy of the Gospel which he quoted, and that he translated it into Greek and Latin.

These statements are simply "fairy tales" to cover his unacknowledged borrowings from Origen and from a lost commentary on St. Matthew by Apollinaris of Laodicea.⁴⁰ Jerome had not the slightest scruple about appropriating other men's work and taking the credit of it to himself. He was, in fact, "one of the most shameless and fraudulent literary swindlers and freebooters that ever existed. There could be no work that he had not read, studied, and quoted, no important thought that he had not originated, no out-of-the-way information that he had not collected. He indeed claimed to have read books that never existed" (*op. cit.* 67 n.). Most readers of Schmidtke's book will feel that this is a gross over-statement. It is certainly the case that Jerome was not distinguished for a scrupulous regard for accuracy, and that in the composition of his books he availed himself very freely of material drawn from other writers; but between this and the deliberate acts of falsity and imposture charged against him by Schmidtke, there is a wide difference. It is possible, for instance, that Jerome was mistaken when he declared that the Nazarene Gospel was often used by Origen; but if he was, there is an innocent explanation if we assume that in both Gospels there was some material in common. The strength of the argument, however, for distinguishing Origen's Gospel according to the Hebrews from the Nazarene Gospel is independent of one's views of Jerome's character and literary methods. It rests mainly on five considerations—to mention those brought forward by Schmidtke which seem to me to have the greatest weight. (1) On the testimony of Eusebius (*H.E.* iv. 22. 8), Hegesippus distinguished and quoted from two Gospels—the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Syriac (Aramaic) Gospel. (2) A passage found in Ignatius (*Ephes.* iii.) and quoted by Jerome as occurring also in the Nazarene Gospel, in which Christ says after the resurrection, "I am not a bodiless

demon," is referred by Origen to the *Teaching of Peter*, while Eusebius declares that he does not know the source from which the saying is derived. (3) The Nazarene Gospel was, as we shall see, a Gospel with close relations to canonical Matthew: this being so, one would have expected Origen, who was accustomed to discuss different traditions, to refer to its deviations from the canonical account, if these had been known to him. This he never does, except in one doubtful instance—the version of the Rich Young Ruler in the Latin text. Moreover, as Eusebius informs us (*H.E.* vi. 25. 4), Origen was acquainted with the tradition of an original Hebrew Matthew, but he never suggests that there is any possible relation between it and the Gospel according to the Hebrews from which he quotes. (4) "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," as we learn from Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 27. 4), was the sole Gospel of Ebionites who rejected Paul; whereas, as we shall see, the Nazarene Gospel belonged to a community which honoured Paul. (5) Had the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Nazarene Gospel been the same, Theodore of Mopsuestia, who was an accomplished scholar and well acquainted with the literature of the Church, would not have declared that the Nazarene Gospel was a fifth Gospel fabricated by Jerome himself.

It cannot be said that any one of these arguments is quite conclusive, and even in their cumulative effect they are not altogether convincing, but they are sufficient to raise serious doubts as to the identity of the Alexandrian "Gospel according to the Hebrews" and Jerome's Gospel of the Nazarenes, and indeed afford reasonable ground for believing that these were different works. So far at least Schmidtke's remarkable gift of critical analysis has brought this extremely difficult question. At the same time I cannot help feeling that we would account more satisfactorily for all the confusing references if, while allowing that the two Gospels were current as separate writings,

we were to assume that they had a good deal in common, and that they were, in fact, different and considerably divergent editions of the same Gospel. That theory, which in the nature of the case cannot be proved, would, it seems to me, absolve Jerome from any suspicion of falsehood, and would also do justice to the arguments on which Schmidtke has based his conclusion that the Gospels were entirely different and had no relation to each other. But even on this view we shall do wisely to maintain the distinction between the Alexandrian and the Nazarene Gospel.

We pass, then, to the consideration of the ALEXANDRIAN GOSPEL "according to the Hebrews." It was the Gospel used by Jewish Christians in Egypt, and, as we gather from the verbal agreement of the saying quoted by Clement with one of the Oxyrhynchus sayings, its language was Greek. This, however, does not exclude the possibility that it was originally written in Aramaic for the use of a Jewish-Christian community in Syria and subsequently brought to Egypt where it was translated. Whatever were its peculiarities when viewed alongside the canonical Gospels, it is clear that it was not regarded by Clement and Origen as a heretical writing, but, on the contrary, was held by them in high esteem. This seems to be decisive against Schmidtke's identification of the Alexandrian Gospel with the Gospel of the Ebionites which has been already discussed. As to the character of the Gospel we can say nothing definite, for only two certain quotations from it have survived, and it would be rash to ascribe to it, as Schmidtke does, several of the extracts given by Jerome from the Nazarene Gospel. Nor, as it seems to me, is there sufficient reason for maintaining that the Oxyrhynchus sayings are all extracted from the Gospel according to the Hebrews. One of them certainly is; the saying taken from that Gospel

by Clement occurs also, in words practically identical, in the second collection of *Logoi* discovered by Grenfell and Hunt in 1903. It must remain an open question whether the Alexandrian Gospel and the "Sayings of Jesus" stand in any relation to one another or not.⁴¹ We must, accordingly, in characterizing the Gospel keep to the information given by Clement, Origen, and Eusebius and content ourselves with saying that it was of the Synoptic type and not far removed from canonical rank, and that, as it was used by Ebionites of the more orthodox class, it probably contained the narrative of the Virgin Birth.

The more important of the two quotations from the Alexandrian Gospel is that given by Origen and describes an incident apparently connected with the Temptation of Jesus. The saying is also recorded three times by Jerome as occurring in the Gospel of the Nazarenes. [It runs as follows: "*Just now my mother, the Holy Spirit, took me by one of my hairs and carried me away to the great mountain Tabor.*" Three points⁴² call for some remark. *First*, the strange representation that Jesus was borne by the Spirit *by one of his hairs*. That to us is extravagantly grotesque, but it would not appear in that light to the original readers. It is merely a significant exaggeration of the language used in several Old Testament passages, in which rapture by the Divine Spirit is spoken of, the closest analogy being the words in Ezek. viii. 3: "And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem." In the apocryphal book *Bel and the Dragon* (ver. 36) we also read: "Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown, and bare him by the hair of his head, and through the rush of his spirit set him in Babylon." In the apparently fantastic detail of the single hair in our Gospel there is a delicate suggestion that no compulsion was put on Jesus when He was borne to the

scene of the Temptation. "He followed the flight of the Spirit willingly . . . so that only a quite gentle lead by a single hair was necessary."⁴³ We may contrast with this the account in Mark (i. 12), that Jesus was *driven* by the Spirit into the wilderness; which does not, as it seems to do, contradict the representation of the Alexandrian Gospel, but suggests the intense emotion felt by our Lord as He yielded Himself willingly to the constraint of the Spirit. *Secondly*, the scene of the Temptation—obviously the third temptation recorded in Matt. iv. 8 ff.—is described as "the great mountain Tabor." Oscar Holtzmann regards the mention of Tabor as "a feature full of inner actuality"—a judgment which, I venture to think, is as remote from probability as it is possible for any judgment to be. No writer with any knowledge of the topography of Palestine, nor Jesus Himself from whom the description of the incident is professedly derived, could have spoken of Tabor as a "great mountain," for although it is a prominent hill in Lower Galilee it rises only some 1400 feet above the level of the plain; and further, this hill, crowned with a Roman fortress, apart from its insignificant height, could not have presented itself to the mind of Jesus as a suitable setting for the temptation which came to Him from His vision of the glory of the kingdoms of the world. To give names to persons and places referred to in the Gospel tradition was a common practice in later Christian writings, and in this instance "Tabor" was probably chosen because, as we learn from passages in the Old Testament, there was something in its form and position which appealed to the imagination (Ps. lxxxix. 12; Jer. xlv. 18). In any case this hill was early associated with incidents in the life of Jesus; after the third century it was the traditional site of the Transfiguration, and Epiphanius states (*Hær.* 51. 21) that he knew many who identified it with the hill of the Temptation. We are warranted in concluding that the mention of

Tabor in the Gospel according to the Hebrews was "due to reminiscences of Scripture," and that it was "the kind of reference that would come to a writer at a distance to whom Tabor was merely a Bible mountain, known to him by the Scripture passages concerning it."⁴⁴ *Thirdly*, the most remarkable detail in the saying is Christ's speaking of the Holy Spirit as His mother. In this conception it is possible that there may be a trace of Gnostic influence, but the simplest explanation of it is that as we are compelled by the necessities of language to speak of a personal Deity as having sex, so Syriac-speaking Christians made the Holy Spirit feminine under the influence of the word *ruḥa* (spirit), which is feminine. Jerome has some sensible words about this. He says: "We must not think that there is sex in the Powers of God, though even the Holy Spirit Himself is spoken of according to the peculiarities of the Hebrew language in the feminine as *Ruḥa*, in the Greek in the neuter as τὸ Πνεῦμα, in the Latin in the masculine as *Spiritus*; whence we must understand . . . that it is not so much sex that is signified as it is the idiom of the language that is being expressed."⁴⁵ This being so, for Christians who spoke Aramaic the Holy Spirit was feminine, and it followed quite naturally that the Spirit from whom Jesus had His origin was spoken of as His mother. Origen had a difficulty about this and sought to explain it in the manner already stated. But it presented no difficulty to those who thought and spoke in Aramaic. Thus in the Acts of Thomas, a product of the Syriac-speaking Church, the Holy Spirit is the Divine Mother, and in Aphraates (first half of fourth century) the Spirit is spoken of as the mother of a man.⁴⁶ It is, I think, a fair inference from this passage of the Alexandrian Gospel that it was originally written in Aramaic for the use of Jewish Christians in Syria.

[The other fragment of the Alexandrian Gospel is quoted by Clement in a shorter and a longer form: (1) "*He who wonders*

(ὁ θαυμάσας) *shall reign, and he who reigns shall rest*"; (2) "*He who seeks shall not cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall be astonished (θαμβηθήσεται), and being astonished he shall reign, and reigning he shall rest.*" The longer form is found almost *verbatim* in the first saying of the second Oxyrhynchus collection, except that the opening clause is not a simple statement but an injunction, "*Let not him who seeketh cease (from seeking) until he finds.*" Clement quotes the shorter form as an illustration of the Platonic maxim that "*wonder (τὸ θαυμάζειν) is the beginning of philosophy*"; but there seems little doubt that this context throws no light on the original meaning of the saying. Clement's interpretation certainly presents a truth in perfect harmony with the teaching of Jesus, who was often surprised at the dulness of men's hearts, and made it plain (cf. Matt. xi. 21 ff.) that what kept men out of the Divine kingdom was their inability to see anything to wonder at in manifest exhibitions of the redeeming grace of God. The glory of Divine realities could be apprehended and eagerly welcomed, not by "the wise and understanding" who had lost the capacity of seeing new and surprising things, but by those who retained the child's simplicity and sense of wonder (Matt. xi. 25). All that is true, but it does not seem to be the point of the saying. Rather the longer form of it indicates that wonder was thought of, not as the necessary condition for receiving the Divine revelation, but as the state of mind which was produced in those whose eager seeking for the blessings of the kingdom had been rewarded by the discovery of their amazing worth. The whole saying is an impressive elaboration of Christ's words, "*seek and ye shall find*" (Matt. vii. 7), with the emphasis laid on the astonishing disclosures and benefits which are in store for the unwearied seeker. This extension of Christ's injunction may have been suggested by a parable like that of the Finding of the Hid

Treasure (Matt. xiii. 44), which Harnack has brought forward to elucidate the saying; but it may well have come straight from the heart of Christian experience, in which the first feeling is an awed amazement at the riches of God's goodness.⁴⁷ The actual reward bestowed on those who seek until they find is represented as *reigning* and *resting*, both of which, it is probable, are to be understood eschatologically. As to the former, it is sufficient to indicate passages like Rom. v. 17, 2 Tim. ii. 12, Rev. iii. 21, xxii. 5, and as to the latter, Rev. xiv. 13, which show that these conceptions were used from early Christian days to express the nature of the Divine salvation. Close parallels are found in 2 Clem. v. 5 ("the promise of Christ is great and wonderful, even the rest of the coming kingdom and of the life eternal"), and in the Acts of Thomas, 136 ("they who worthily obtain the good things of that world have rest, and resting they shall reign").⁴⁸

It is impossible to state with any certainty, with nothing more to go upon than the two passages which have been preserved, what relation the Alexandrian Gospel held to the canonical Gospels. But the quotations have the appearance of belonging to a writing which was secondary, and, though not departing widely from the earlier recorded tradition, revealed the characteristics of an age which supplemented a generally accepted narrative by the addition of fanciful details and by reflexions of a somewhat obvious kind. The character of the extracts would be adequately explained by supposing that a writer had dealt in the manner indicated with material furnished by the Gospel of St. Matthew (chs. iv. 1, 8, vii. 7), which of all the earlier evangelic records was the one likeliest to be known in a Jewish-Christian community.

There remains to be considered the GOSPEL OF THE NAZARENES, so frequently referred to by Jerome. Who the

Nazarenes were is not clear. Jerome associates those from whom he received his copy of the Gospel with the Syrian town of Bercea (*de vir. illus.* 3), and in agreement with this Epiphanius states that the sect was found among the Berceans in Cœle-Syria.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Epiphanius declares that there were Nazoræans much farther south in the neighbourhood of Pella, while Jerome thought of them not as confined to Bercea, but as widely scattered over the East.⁵⁰ Schmidtke's opinion, which, however, must be considered doubtful, is that they were an orthodox community of Jewish Christians who had separated themselves from the local Church of Bercea, in order that they might observe with greater freedom the national customs to which they were attached. But however this may be, the Nazarenes were certainly catholic in their sympathies. They did not, like the Jewish Christians of the left wing, reject St. Paul; they held both him and his Gospel in high esteem, and recognized that the spread of the light of the knowledge of Christ was mainly due to him. Thus while they themselves conformed to the Jewish Law, they did not regard it as obligatory on others as necessary for salvation.

We gather from Jerome that the Nazarene Gospel had a close relation to canonical Matthew. It was a widespread and erroneous belief in the early Christian centuries that St. Matthew's Gospel was first written in Hebrew and afterwards translated into Greek.⁵¹ Jerome shared this opinion, and, to begin with at least, believed that the Gospel which he had received from the Nazarenes was the Hebrew original of the canonical book. "Matthew (he says), . . . first of all the evangelists, composed a Gospel of Christ in Judæa in the Hebrew language and characters; . . . who translated it into Greek is not sufficiently ascertained. Furthermore, the Hebrew (text) itself is preserved to this day in the library of Cæsarea which the martyr Pamphilus most diligently collected. I also was

allowed by the Nazarenes who use the volume in the Syrian city of Berœa to copy it" (*de vir. illus.* 3). In later references to the Gospel, Jerome does not speak so confidently; he simply states that the prevailing opinion was that it was the Hebrew Matthew. One inference, however, is perfectly clear: the Nazarene Gospel presented a narrative which was on the whole very similar to that of canonical Matthew, but there were peculiarities in it which led some (among them Jerome himself) to doubt whether it could properly be called the original of Matthew. That there were notable deviations from the canonical Gospel is evident from the fact that Jerome considered it necessary to translate it. The character of the fragments preserved and the evidence which we have of the Gospel incidents recorded support this conclusion. Schmidtke's theory of the origin of the Gosepl is exceedingly attractive. He believes that in early days canonical Matthew was the favourite, though not the sole, Gospel of the Nazarene community; that in public worship it was orally translated into Aramaic by the preacher, who dealt somewhat freely with it, supplementing it by details from Luke, adding touches of his own to smooth away difficulties or to give the narrative a greater vividness, on occasion illuminating a passage by some allusion to the Old Testament; and that when the Nazarenes wished to have a written Gospel in their mother tongue nothing more was necessary than to fix in writing what had long been familiar through the spoken word. On this view the Nazarene Gospel was simply the canonical Matthew with targumistic additions. That the Gospel came into being precisely in this way is, of course, incapable of proof, but no theory could more neatly explain the composite features revealed in the fragments of a Gospel that had strong affinities with St. Matthew and yet had marked peculiarities of its own.⁵² Epiphanius, it should be noted, had heard of the Nazarene Gospel, although he does not seem to have had any personal knowledge of it;

but so far as it goes, the information which he gives tallies with what we have already learned, for in speaking of the Nazoræans, who differed from catholic Christians chiefly in their practice of the Jewish Law, he states that they used the Gospel of Matthew very complete in Hebrew (*Hær.* 29. 9).

The fragments preserved by Jerome are not our only source of information about the Gospel of the Nazarenes. Its reputation as the original Matthew led to some of its readings finding their way into a number of minuscule MSS. as marginal notes to passages in the canonical Gospel, and these scholia, giving the variants of τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν, that is, the Jewish (Gospel of Matthew) are of value, not so much for the additional material which they provide, as for the indication of passages in canonical Matthew, which had parallels in the Nazarene Gospel. The scholia show that the "Judaic" Gospel was practically coextensive with the canonical writing.⁵³ Besides these marginal notes other fragments may with considerable probability be ascribed to the Gospel of the Nazarenes. Eusebius in his *Theophania*, quoting a saying of Jesus about the separations in families caused by the Gospel (cf. Matt. x. 34 ff.), describes it as occurring in "the Gospel which is found among the Jews in the Hebrew language." The saying runs: "I choose for myself the good whom my Father in heaven has given me." Another possibly Eusebian passage gives a version of the Parable of the Talents to which we shall refer later, and states that it was derived from "the Gospel which has come to us in Hebrew characters." We may be reasonably sure that both these passages belonged to Jerome's Gospel. To these we may add with some confidence the story of a Rich Man seeking Life, given as a note on Matt. xix. 16 ff. in the Latin version of Origen's commentary. Our knowledge of the Gospel derived from these various sources justifies us in the opinion that it followed canonical Matthew somewhat closely and contained a parallel narrative. We may

assume that it included the story of the Virgin Birth, for no Gospel which omitted that was at all likely to have been regarded as the original Matthew.

We pass now to the consideration of the most important fragments of the Gospel. It is what one would naturally expect that the quotations given by Jerome and others are passages which show a considerable departure from the corresponding passages in St. Matthew. Take first those dealing with Christ's Baptism.

The first passage records an incident preliminary to the Baptism. It runs as follows: *Behold, the mother of the Lord and His brethren said to Him, John the Baptist baptizeth for remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But He said to them, Wherein have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized by him? unless perchance this very thing that I have said is ignorance*" (Jerome, *contra Pelag.* 3. 2). We have in this one of the many attempts to get rid of the difficulty which very early perplexed the minds of Christian believers as to the reason why Jesus submitted to an ordinance which was for the remission of sins. The canonical Gospels, with the exception of St. Mark, reveal each in its own way the prevailing feeling of discomfort in presence of this incident in Christ's life. That is brought out perhaps most strikingly in St. Luke's narrative, for after a very full account of John's activity and of those who came to be baptized, the baptism of Jesus is alluded to merely in a participial clause (iii. 21)—an indication that the evangelist was "conscious that he was on delicate ground."⁵⁴ What had the Sinless One to do with a baptism for penitents? What had led Him, who was conscious of no fault, to take His place among men confessing their sins? It was a real problem for those who believed in the sinlessness of Jesus,⁵⁵ and for many it is a problem still. If for others it hardly exists, it is because the years have brought a deeper

insight into the distance that our Lord was prepared to go in identifying Himself with those whom He had come to redeem. Nothing could have been clearer to Jesus than that the movement which the Baptist had inaugurated was a true preparation for His own work, and that repentance was the supreme need of the hour ; accordingly, even at the risk of having His action misunderstood—a risk which in all His intercourse with men He was content to take—He who had no sins to repent of stood alongside of those who had, thereby emphasizing the completeness of His sympathy with them, and thereby also placing the seal of His approval on the mission of John. In that way we interpret the presence of Jesus among those who flocked to John's baptism of repentance, and it is an interpretation which from its harmony with the whole spirit of Christ's life not only dissipates any feeling of uneasiness which the incident might naturally produce, but enhances our sense of the self-abnegation of Him who was made sin on our behalf that knew no sin.⁵⁶ We can see, however, that in the early Church the Baptism of Jesus was a source of grave perplexity. The narrative in St. Matthew is the first indication that Christians were concerned about it—an indication at least to those who believe that in Matt. iii. 14 f. we have not an objective record, but an interpretation of the incident. The solution of the problem offered by the First Evangelist is one that brings us surely near the truth, for it emphasizes, on the one hand, the fact that for His own sake Jesus had no need to submit to a baptism for penitents ; and, on the other, although the words are vague (" thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness "), it indicates that there was a moral demand in John's baptism to which He who had no need for the cleansing of sin felt bound to respond. Later writers, perhaps because the explanation of Matthew was not easily intelligible, adduced other plainer reasons for the baptism of Jesus—the commonest

among the orthodox being that it was to sanctify the water and to make it efficacious for the cleansing of sin.⁵⁷ But in spite of all explanations the Church was conscious of a difficulty, and Harnack has pointed out that in the Roman Symbol (the Apostles' Creed), where the outstanding facts of Christ's life are mentioned, the Baptism is omitted.⁵⁸

It is with this problem thrown up by Christ's acceptance of baptism that the fragment in our Gospel deals. The explanation given in the First Gospel was not altogether satisfactory to the Nazarenes. With other orthodox Christians they believed in the sinlessness of Jesus, and they made a sincere attempt to conceive what had passed through His mind before He went to John's baptism. When His mother and brethren suggested that they should go as a family to the Jordan, He showed reluctance. There is real insight here: whatever eventually led Jesus to go, we must regard it as true that He went only after deep searching of heart. It was a baptism for the remission of sins, and His conscience was pure. "Wherein have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized by him?" Yet in the end Jesus went. Why? The answer is suggested in the somewhat enigmatical words of the Gospel: "unless perchance that which I have just said is ignorance." I suggest an explanation which is essentially that given above as the true reason for Christ's submission to baptism. In answer to His mother's and His brethren's proposal to go to the Jordan to be baptized, Jesus virtually said: "I have no sins to confess; I need no baptism; I will not go." But on reflexion He added: "perhaps I have spoken in ignorance; baptism may have a meaning for me, although I have no sins to cleanse away." And because it dawned on Jesus' soul that baptism had a meaning for Him, sinless though He was, He went and was baptized. In this interpretation the word "ignorance" has no reference to Christ's words about His consciousness

of being sinless, but to His implied assertion that there was no call for Him to be baptized. If the words of the Gospel are to be so understood, it was manifestly the belief of the Nazarenes that Jesus went to baptism, not because He needed cleansing from sin, but because baptism had a significance for Him other than its significance for sinners. In favour of this interpretation should be reckoned the fact that Jerome quoted the words and saw nothing in them to take objection to; they were, in fact, used by him in his controversy with Pelagius.

The words, "unless, perchance, that which I have just said is ignorance," are, however, usually taken in another sense. They are read as meaning that Jesus, although He was conscious of no fault, would not claim to be sinless. On this view what He said in effect was this: "I am not conscious of any sin, but I may perhaps be mistaken." If this be the meaning, it is a daring explanation. It is conceivable as coming from orthodox Christians only on the supposition that Christ's admission of possible ignorance as to His true state did not arise from any doubt regarding Himself as sinless, but from an intense humility. It was a humble, unassertive mind and not any suspicion of unrealized sin that brought Jesus to the side of His brethren at the baptism of John. It was no doubt possible for men who believed in the sinlessness of Jesus to hold this view, but it was a perilous line of thought. It led to serious misconception. It had all the appearance of suggesting the possibility of sin in Jesus, and because of that it gave great offence. It was on the ground that this passage about the Baptism lent itself so easily to abuse by heretics that Theodore of Mopsuestia was so bitterly opposed to Jerome's "fifth Gospel." Pelagius made use of it to support the view that Jesus had been guilty, not only of natural, but of voluntary sins.⁵⁹ Some modern scholars draw the same inference from the passage, and say that Jewish Christians went so far that

they dared to question the sinlessness of Jesus (so Resch, *Agrapha*, 345).

However the passage be interpreted, it cannot be regarded as an authentic utterance of Jesus. Oscar Holtzmann, who in his *Life of Jesus* makes use of the Nazarene Gospel (the Gospel according to the Hebrews) as an independent authority along with the Synoptics, says that "an utterance like this would never have found a place in any Gospel unless it had actually fallen from the lips of Jesus" (p. 47). That is an entirely uncritical assumption, made in forgetfulness of the strangest sayings put into the mouth of Jesus in many of the uncanonical Gospels. [The whole passage, far from being "the most ancient preliminary history of the Baptism which we know,"⁶⁰ belongs to an age of reflexion later than St. Matthew, and is an attempt to deal with the difficulty felt in regard to the Baptism by Christians themselves and urged upon them by their opponents. If the former of the two interpretations of the passage which we have given be adopted, it is an attempt which is worthy of respect; if the latter be the correct interpretation, the attempt cannot be said to be particularly successful, but at least it reveals a more earnest grappling with the problem than we find, for instance, in those writers who discovered the motive for Christ's acceptance of baptism in the consecration of the water.

\ The second fragment connected with the Baptism has a marked Jewish-Christian character. ["It came to pass, we read, when the Lord had come up from the water, that the entire fountain of the Holy Spirit descended and rested on Him and said to Him, My Son, in all the prophets I was looking for Thee, that Thou mightest come, and that I might rest in Thee: for Thou art my rest; Thou art my first-born Son that reignest for ever" (Jerome, *Comm. in Isai.* iv. 156). It may be noted here, and might have been referred to in connexion with the previous fragment,

that the name "the Lord" applied to Jesus in descriptive narrative—a usage that is very rare in Matthew and Mark and comparatively frequent in Luke and John—seems to have been common in the Nazarene Gospel. In this respect it is similar to the Gospel of Peter. It is a mark of a relatively late date.

"The entire fountain of the Holy Spirit" is a remarkable expression, and there seems something extremely inappropriate in speaking of a fountain descending and resting on a person; but the metaphor was probably suggested by passages like "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh" and was chosen for use here because the descent of the Holy Spirit was regarded as a baptism supplementary to the baptism by water (cf. Matt. iii. 11).

It is manifest that this account of our Lord's experience at Baptism is strongly influenced by the Old Testament, which is precisely what one might expect in a Gospel used by Jewish Christians with orthodox sympathies. Among Christians of that type there was a deep sense of the unity of the Church with the Old Testament ecclesia to which the Divine promises had been given, and central in their thoughts of Jesus was the faith that He was the Messiah in whom the ancient prophecies had been fulfilled. The connexion of this baptismal fragment with Old Testament prophecy is unmistakable. It was quoted by Jerome when he was commenting on Isa. xi. 2: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him," and there is no room for doubt that the representation of the Nazarene Gospel was based on these words and on the further conception which had its roots in Judaism, that the Divine Spirit, which was partially manifested in the prophets, would be completely revealed in the Messiah.⁶¹ What these orthodox Jewish Christians were concerned to emphasize was the fact that all that was best in the Hebrew religion had come to its fruition in Jesus Christ. The words of Jesus reported in Matt. v. 17 expressed one of the

basal convictions of their faith. To them the glory of Christianity was that it gathered the scattered rays of Divine truth which had fitfully shone in the Old Testament prophets and saints and brought them to a focus in the perfect radiance of the revelation in Christ. There is a striking harmony of feeling and expression between the passage in our Gospel and the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is the same contrast between "the prophets" in whom the Divine revelation had been spasmodic and partial and "the Son" in whom it was unbroken and complete. In the prophets the Spirit had been able to reveal itself only imperfectly, for in them, as another fragment of the Gospel relates, "some matter of sin was found"; first in one and then in another it had taken up its abode, yet only for a time; but in Christ the Spirit was fully revealed: "the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit" had come upon Him, and in Him it had found rest. The temper of expectation which was characteristic of Hebrew faith is expressed in the wistful yearning of the Spirit for one in whom it might dwell in all its fulness, and that yearning was satisfied in the appearance of Christ. "In all the prophets I was looking for Thee that Thou mightest come, and that I might rest in Thee." In this fine thought the unity of revelation in the Hebrew religion and in Christianity was perfectly conceived—a fact on which Jewish Christians, and not they alone, delighted to dwell.

As in the Second and Third Gospels, the Divine voice speaks to Jesus Himself. It is not, however, a voice from heaven, but the voice of the Spirit which has come down and rested on Him. Thus even more distinctly than in the canonical Gospels we are enabled to realize that the Baptism meant for Jesus the rise into clear consciousness of the conviction of His Messianic vocation and His supernatural endowment for it. The uniqueness of His position as compared with that of the prophets is expressed in the words addressed to Him by the Spirit,

“My Son,” “my first-born Son that reignest for ever.” We are not entitled to draw any inference from this manner of address at the Baptism as to the Nazarenes’ acceptance or rejection of the birth of Jesus through the Spirit. The character of their Gospel as based on Matthew and the knowledge which we possess of the doctrinal position of the more orthodox Jewish Christians, make it highly probable that the Gospel opened with the Birth narrative.⁶² There is nothing in the baptismal fragment to render this view untenable. The Church in general accepted the double fact of the Divine origin of Jesus through the Spirit, and His special endowment for His vocation by the Spirit at the Baptism. There is no reason why the Nazarenes should not have done the same. The Church’s faith caused difficulty, and as we learn from Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* (ch. 87) the opponents of Christianity pressed hard at this point. Yet in spite of difficulties, the instinct of the Church led it to reject an Adoptianist Christology, and to hold that the Sonship of Jesus did not date from His baptism, but was “native and original, with roots as deep as His being.”⁶³

We have no intention of providing a commentary on all the extant fragments of the Nazarene Gospel, but we have discussed the baptismal passages at length because they are much the most striking examples of the way in which the Gospel deviated from canonical Matthew. It is natural, of course, that the quotations given by Jerome should be the passages peculiar to the Gospel, but we are warranted in assuming that for the most part the canonical account was closely followed. There is comparatively little matter that is absolutely new, and what there is has no great claim to rest on early and reliable tradition. At the most there is only a saying or two which suggests that authentic material was still to be found in the stream of oral tradition. Perhaps the most

noteworthy of these sayings is that which runs: "*Never be glad except when ye look upon your brother in love*" (Jerome, *Comm. in Ephes.* 5. 4: vii. 641). The saying is quoted by Jerome when he is discussing "unseemly jesting," and it is quite improbable that the use which he makes of it gives the slightest hint of its original application. In Jerome's eyes jesting of any kind was unseemly; for him a life full of sorrow and tears was the Christian ideal, and rejoicing was permissible only in the special circumstances mentioned. We may be sure that in the Gospel the saying bore a significance quite different from that. It may not retain the *ipsissima verba* of Christ, but it has the ring of a genuine utterance. In what circumstances it was spoken we are unable to tell, but if we consider the common human failing which leads men to rejoice in another's misfortune, we realize how completely in harmony the saying is with the teaching of Jesus. It is a condemnation of *Schadenfreude*. Jerome also states that "in the Gospel according to the Hebrews which the Nazarenes read it is counted among the greatest faults *that one should sadden the spirit of his brother*" (*Comm. in Ezek.* 18. 7: v. 207). It may be too much to claim that the saying referred to in these words was uttered by Christ, but it was in any case conceived by one who had entered into His mind.

Of other extracts from the Gospel which contain new material our judgment must be less favourable. When, for instance, we read in the account of a Rich Man seeking Life that, when Jesus made the great requirement of him, he "*began to scratch his head, and it did not please him*"; or when again we find that the man with the withered hand approached our Lord with the words, "*I am a mason seeking my living with my hands; I pray Thee, Jesus, to restore my health, lest I shamefully beg my food*," we feel that these are touches most naturally explained as the discursive and fanciful embellishments of a

preacher. A change in the Matthæan narrative, possibly designed to heighten the effect, is seen in the detail that instead of the rending of the temple veil "*the lintel of the temple of a wonderful size was broken in pieces,*" although it may be surmised that the representation was influenced by a reminiscence of Isa. vi. 4. There is a peculiar interest in the statement of Jerome that he had found *mahar* ("to-morrow") in the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, which accordingly read, "Give us this day our bread for to-morrow." There has been much controversy whether or not this was the original form of the petition and the question cannot here be discussed, but on the whole, as it seems to me, the balance of probability inclines in favour of the view that here as elsewhere the Nazarene Gospel gives a version which is secondary. Much cannot perhaps be made of the argument which Jerome emphasized, that a prayer for to-morrow's bread would contradict the saying to "take no anxious thought for the morrow"; but it is not a form of words that would come naturally to the lips in a petition for the simple necessities of life. Moreover, it would seem that *mahar* could more easily be accounted for as an attempt to translate the canonical ἐπιούσιος, regarded mistakenly as derived from ἐπιούσα ("the coming day"), than that a word so puzzling in its form and meaning as ἐπιούσιος should have been used to translate *mahar*, when a simpler expression was available.

Another fragment which records that our Lord's first appearance after the resurrection was to James the Just, points clearly to a Jewish-Christian bias in favour of the head of the Jerusalem Church. It runs in part as follows: "*But when the Lord had given the shroud to the priest's servant, He went to James and appeared to him; for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which the Lord had drunk the cup,*⁶⁴ *until he should see Him rise from those that sleep . . .*" (Jerome,

de vir. illus. 2). Apart from the fact that in the New Testament the appearance to James was not the first (see 1 Cor. xv. 5 ff.), there are several indications that this story was a later addition. The handing of the shroud to the priest's servant is the sort of detail which we find in second-century writings which were concerned to show that the resurrection was attested by others than Christ's disciples (so the *Gospel of Peter*), and the oath which James took, by which he declared his faith that Jesus would rise from the dead, is obviously not genuine, but is designed, in the Jewish-Christian interest, to show that James was a believer before Christ died. That James is called "the Just" in a subsequent part of the fragment is also a sign of comparatively late date.

Two other extracts from the Nazarene Gospel may suffice to show the manner of its departure from St. Matthew's account. We take first the version of the Parable of the Talents. In the form in which this parable occurred in "the Gospel which has come to us in Hebrew characters," we find that one of the servants increased his talent, the second hid it in the earth, and the third squandered it with harlots and flute-girls. The first was welcomed by his master, the second was only censured, the third was cast into prison. Clearly the alteration of the canonical account was due to a feeling that the servant who buried his talent had been too harshly dealt with: mere neglect did not merit so stern a punishment as to be cast into the outer darkness; accordingly at the sacrifice of the main truth which the parable was designed to teach, a servant was introduced who had spent his master's money in scandalous living. A similar misapprehension of the real meaning of Christ's words is found in the version of the story of the Rich Young Ruler. When the rich man was annoyed at the greatness of Christ's demand, Jesus said to him: "*How sayest thou, I have done the Law and the prophets? For it is written in the Law, Thou*

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; and behold, many of thy brethren, sons of Abraham, are clothed in filth, dying of hunger, and thy house is full of many good things, and nothing at all goes out of it to them" (Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* xix. 16: Latin transl.). There are signs elsewhere in the fragments that St. Luke was used as well as St. Matthew in the compilation of the Nazarene Gospel, and here there seems to be no doubt that the story of the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew has been combined with the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus as recorded in Luke. But what is important to notice is that once again there is a turn given to the narrative which mitigates the severity of Christ's words by showing that the rich man who claimed to have fulfilled the Law had in reality been living a heartless, selfish life. The important moral truth set forth has led Dr. Glover to say that "we need not altogether reject this variant of the story";⁶⁵ but, in fact, this reading of it misses the whole point of the story. At the crisis of His mission Christ wanted men who were prepared for the kingdom's sake to sacrifice everything, and the rich young ruler could not face the sacrifice. It was that refusal, and not any deceit or neglect of the poor, which shut him out from the fellowship of Christ.

In estimating the value of the Nazarene Gospel we must in fairness keep in mind that we have only fragments of it. As a whole it must have shown a greater similarity to St. Matthew than we should gather from the extant remains. Nevertheless what we know of it is sufficient to warrant us in placing it on a distinctly lower level than the Gospels in the canon, and in refusing to regard it, as Oscar Holtzmann does, as a primary authority for the life and teaching of Jesus. At the same time it deservedly holds the highest place among the Gospels which the Church declined to canonize. In harmony with the prevailing temper of the Syrian Church, it showed no sympathy with fantastic speculations, and it exhibited, one would judge,

in a marked degree the ethical spirit of Christianity in its insistence on the law of love and on sacrifice for the sake of the wretched and the poor. It came from a community of Christians who had a strong pride in their ancient Jewish heritage, but whose chief glory it was that the Divine promises given to their fathers had been fulfilled in their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOSPEL OF PETER.

IN the chapter of his *Ecclesiastical History* (iii. 25) in which he mentions the New Testament writings which were universally received and those which were disputed, Eusebius draws a sharp distinction between books belonging to these two classes and those which had their origin among heretics. In a short list of these heretical writings, which he sweepingly condemns as "utterly absurd and impious," several Gospels are mentioned, and at the head of them the Gospel of Peter. How far Eusebius was acquainted with the Gospel on which he passed so severe a judgment we have no means of knowing, for he gives no quotation from it; but we may fairly assume that he knew enough of it to justify him in including it among the writings which, according to the strict standards of the Nicene period, were branded without hesitation as heretical. In an earlier passage in his *History* (iii. 3) he speaks of the books attributed to St. Peter, and states that the Gospel which bore that apostle's name, together with other works which he mentions, had not been handed down among catholic writings and had not been quoted as authoritative by any ecclesiastical author of his own or of an earlier day. So far as we are able to check this statement we find it to be substantially correct. The Gospel of Peter is mentioned by name only by two writers earlier than Eusebius. In Origen we have a passing reference which contains the information that certain persons who held

that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former marriage, based their opinion on a tradition found in the Gospel according to Peter and in the Book of James (*Comm. in Matt.*, tom. x. 17). The character of the reference suggests that Origen claimed no authority for the Gospel, although against the majority in the Church he favoured the view which it expressed.⁶⁶ A much more important notice of the Gospel, however, occurs in a pastoral letter written by Serapion, bishop of Antioch at the close of the second century, and part of this letter has been preserved by Eusebius (*H.E.* vi. 12). This fragment we shall have occasion to discuss a little later ; meantime it is sufficient to say that the Gospel of Peter was submitted to Serapion, when he was visiting a town in his diocese, as a book about which there was a sharp difference of opinion, and that he gave, and subsequently on the ground of its faulty doctrine withdrew, his permission that it should be read. That may be said to be all that we learn about the Gospel of Peter from early Church writers. Jerome adds nothing to our scanty information derived from that source ; he mentions the Gospel among "Petrine" books, and rejects it as "apocryphal"—a judgment in which he is followed by the author of the so-called Gelasian Decree.

Of this Gospel not a single fragment was preserved in the passages in which reference had been made to it. Only a very vague idea of its character could be gathered from the portion of Serapion's letter, while it was inferred from Origen's notice about the brethren of Jesus, although the inference was by no means certain, that the author who presumably accepted the Virgin Birth had given an account of it in his Gospel. One can accordingly understand the extraordinary interest which was excited in theological circles when it became known in 1892 that a considerable portion of the lost Gospel had been discovered. Five years earlier a little parchment book had been

found by the French Archæological Mission in a grave in the ancient Christian cemetery at Akhmîm in Upper Egypt, but the importance of the discovery was not immediately recognized. It was only in the early winter of 1892 that the book was published, when the editor, M. Bouriart, was able to announce to the world that a fragment, amounting to about one-half of the whole of the long-lost Gospel of Peter, had come to light. The parchment book contained also a fragment of another Petrine work, the Apocalypse of Peter, and a considerable part of the Greek version of the Book of Enoch. That the identification of the Gospel fragment was beyond all reasonable doubt, was shown by the fact that mention was made in it of Simon Peter as the reputed author and by the character of its contents, which agreed with the doctrinal tendency described by Serapion.

The fragment contains a narrative of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus which is considerably longer than the corresponding account in any of the canonical Gospels.⁶⁷ The opening sentence takes us to that point in the trial of Jesus when Pilate has washed his hands and disowned responsibility for Christ's death (Matt. xxvii. 24).

“ But of the Jews none washed his hands, neither Herod nor any of His judges ; and since they did not choose to wash them, Pilate rose up. And then Herod the king commandeth the Lord to be taken, saying unto them, Whatsoever things I commanded you to do to Him, do ye.”

Here at the outset we come on one of the prominent features of the Gospel of Peter—its strong anti-Jewish feeling (to be referred to later), which is indicated by Pilate's withdrawal from the proceedings against Jesus, and by the obduracy of the Jews who took part in the trial ending in the condemnation pronounced by Herod. How completely Pilate is relieved of all further responsibility is emphasized in the passage immediately following the passing of the sentence on Jesus, in which Joseph (of Arimathæa) is described as asking Pilate's permission to

receive the body of Jesus, and as having his request granted by Herod, to whom it was referred by Pilate.

When Jesus was delivered to the people we read that

“ they took the Lord and pushed Him as they ran and said, Let us drag along the Son of God, since we have gotten power over Him. And they clothed Him with purple and set Him on a seat of judgment, saying, Judge righteously, King of Israel.”

This passage is one of the most important in the fragment with reference to the early use of the Gospel, and to it we shall return.

The description of the Crucifixion contains several very remarkable divergences from the account in any of the canonical Gospels.

“ And they brought two malefactors and crucified the Lord in the midst of them ; but He kept silence as in no wise suffering pain. And when they had set up the cross, they inscribed on it, This is the King of Israel. And they laid His garments before Him and parted them, and cast lots upon them. But one of the malefactors upbraided them, saying, We have suffered thus for the evil which we wrought, but this man, who has become the Saviour of men, what wrong has He done you ? And they had indignation against him and commanded that his legs should not be broken, that he might die in torment. Now it was midday and darkness covered all Judæa, and they were troubled and distressed lest the sun should have set, since He was still alive ; it is written for them that the sun should not set on one who has been put to death. And one of them said, Give Him gall with vinegar to drink ; and they mixed and gave Him to drink. And they fulfilled all things and completed their sins on their own heads. Now many went about with lamps, supposing that it was night. . . . And the Lord cried aloud, saying, My Power, Power, thou hast forsaken me ; and having said this He was taken up. And the same hour the veil of the temple of Jerusalem was rent in twain.”

Jesus was then taken down from the cross, the earth quaking when His body touched the ground. Joseph received the body for burial.

“ And he took the Lord and washed Him and wrapped Him in linen and brought Him into his own grave called Joseph’s Garden.”

A sudden revulsion of feeling then seized the Jews, and they "began to beat their breasts and to say, Woe for our sins! The judgment is at hand and the end of Jerusalem."

The Jewish authorities, fearing that the body of Jesus might be stolen by the disciples, begged a guard from Pilate; and they themselves came and rolled a great stone to the mouth of the sepulchre, and sealed it with seven seals, and then pitched a tent to keep watch. Next morning crowds of sightseers came to see the tomb.

The most striking characteristic of the fragment is found in the description of the resurrection, over which the canonical Gospels cast a veil of silence. The passage may be quoted in full.

"Now in the night in which the Lord's Day was dawning, while the soldiers were keeping guard, two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in heaven, and they saw the heavens opened and two men descending from thence with much light and drawing near to the tomb. And the stone which had been set at the door rolled away of itself and made way in part, and the tomb was opened and both the young men entered. The soldiers, therefore, when they saw this, awakened the centurion and the elders, for they were also there keeping watch, and while they were telling the things that they had seen, again they see coming forth from the tomb three men, two of them supporting the other, and a cross following them, and the head of the two reached to heaven, but that of Him who was led by them was higher than the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens saying, Hast Thou preached to them that sleep? and a response was heard from the cross, Yea."

Another heavenly messenger then entered the tomb. The Jews at the sepulchre went in haste and reported everything to Pilate, who said:

"I am clean from the blood of the Son of God, but thus it seemed good to you."

At the Jews' request Pilate commanded the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing of what they had seen.

The narrative then tells of the visit to the tomb of Mary

Magdalene accompanied by her women-friends. To their surprise

“ they found the tomb open, and they came near and stooped down, and they see there a young man sitting in the midst of the tomb, fair and clothed in a robe exceeding bright, who said to them, Wherefore are ye come ? whom seek ye ? Him who was crucified ? He is risen and gone. But if ye believe not, stoop down and see the place where He lay, that He is not here. For He is risen and has gone to the place from which He was sent. Then the women were afraid and fled.”

The fragment closes with the opening sentences of a narrative which we may presume to have recorded a meeting of Jesus with His disciples in Galilee similar to that in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel.

“ We the twelve disciples of the Lord wept and were in sorrow, and every man departed to his house sorrowing for that which had come to pass. But I Simon Peter and Andrew my brother took our nets and went to the sea ; and there was with us Levi, the son of Alphæus, whom the Lord . . .”

Here the fragment breaks off.

It is obvious from this sketch of the contents of the Petrine fragment that we have to do with a narrative which in its broad features is very similar to the account of the Passion and Resurrection given in the canonical Gospels. In the passages, however, which have been quoted there are many details which are entirely new. For the most part these are to be accounted for by the author's apologetic aims and doctrinal sympathies which will be discussed later. The peculiarities of the Gospel, its leaning towards a docetic view of Christ's person, the description of the resurrection with its apocalyptic imagery, and the numerous departures in detail from the evangelic tradition which was accepted in the Church, are sufficient to explain why the book was classed by Eusebius among writings which had a heretical origin. At the same time it must be admitted that the fragment shows much fainter

traces of doctrinal misconception than one would have inferred to be present in the Gospel from the severity of the judgment of Eusebius, and we are accordingly driven to ask whether that judgment was in accordance with the view taken of the Gospel in orthodox circles in the second century when it was written. This brings us to the consideration of the passage preserved by Eusebius from the tract written by Serapion in reference to the Gospel.

The passage is as follows: "For we, brethren, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ. The writings, however, which are forged under their name we as men of understanding reject, since we know that we have not received matter of this kind. When I was with you I was of the opinion that all of you cleaved to the right faith, and said without going through the Gospel that was submitted by them ⁶⁸ under the name of Peter: If this is the only matter that apparently causes bad feeling among you, let it be read. But now that I have learned from what has been said to me that their mind lurked in a certain heresy, I shall hasten to come to you again; expect me, therefore, brethren, shortly. We however, brethren, when we understood to what sect Marcianus belonged—and how he contradicted himself, not knowing what he said, you will learn from my letter—we were able to borrow from others who used this Gospel, that is to say, from the successors of those who introduced it, whom we call Docetæ (for the most of the thoughts belong to their teaching)—we were able to borrow it from them and to go through it, and to find that the greater part corresponds to the right teaching of the Saviour, but that certain things have been added, which we have appended for you below" (Eusebius, *H.E.* vi. 12).

The writing of Serapion, from which this extract was taken by Eusebius, was a pastoral letter written to the Church in Rhodus, a town on the seacoast about thirty miles north-west

of Antioch. Serapion was bishop of Antioch in the last decade of the second century and in the early years of the third, so that the Gospel of Peter is definitely placed by his reference as a second-century document. There are several important conclusions which may be drawn from Serapion's notice, bearing on the circulation and character of the Gospel. To begin with, it is clear that when Serapion paid his first visit to Rhodus, early, we may assume, in his episcopate, that is to say, soon after the year 190, he had never heard of the Gospel of Peter, or at any rate had no knowledge of its character and contents. This is important, for it proves that however long the Gospel may have been in existence before he became acquainted with it, it cannot have been widely known or have enjoyed any high regard in the main centres of Church life, if indeed it had ever reached them. There is accordingly a strong presumption that its circulation in the second century had not extended far beyond the bounds of the community for whose needs it was originally produced, and was, in fact, confined to circles which lay aside from the main tracks of Christian activity. How it reached Rhodus we have no means of knowing, but we may conjecture that it was brought there by the person named Marcianus in Serapion's letter, who found it to his liking and wished to have it introduced as a lectionary in the worship of the Church. We gather further from Serapion that this action of Marcianus was resented by many of the Christians at Rhodus, and that he, being aggrieved by what he considered their narrow-minded views, had the matter brought before the bishop, at the same time submitting the Gospel to him for his examination. Serapion, for reasons unknown to us, dealt lightly with the question at issue—in a brief episcopal visit there must have been many matters claiming his attention; in any case he contented himself with a hasty glance at the book, and finding nothing that appeared objectionable gave

injunctions that it should be read. He excused himself later for his summary treatment of the matter by stating that he did not suspect that any members of the Church in Rhodus were tainted with heresy, and in what was said at the time by those who opposed Marcianus no charge of that kind can have been suggested. We may suppose that Serapion, whose cursory examination of the Gospel had satisfied him that there was nothing amiss with it, considered that too much was being made of a small matter, and was inclined to agree with Marcianus in attributing a captious spirit to those who objected to the reading of the Gospel. But in whatever way we seek to explain his decision, the sanction which he gave for its use makes two things clear: first, that any heresy which the book contained was well concealed; and second, that at a time when our four Gospels had attained a commanding position of exceptional authority, the leaders of the Church who were responsible for what was read in public worship had no objection to the use of other evangelic writings which were doctrinally correct. This liberty in the use of lectionaries in different churches was characteristic of the second century, as was natural in a period when writings had not become canonical, and when the chief consideration in determining a book's fitness to be read in church was its edifying quality.

Subsequent developments convinced Serapion that he had acted with undue precipitation in giving the Gospel of Peter episcopal sanction. Information reached him that the doctrinal soundness of Marcianus was not above suspicion, and apparently communications passed between the two which did not satisfy the bishop. He found the statements of Marcianus self-contradictory. In these circumstances no other course was possible than to reopen the whole question as to the use of the Gospel. Serapion procured a copy from the adherents of the party of Docetæ, and found on reading it through that while the greater

part of it was unobjectionable there were additions which betrayed the characteristic doctrines of the sect. He accordingly recalled his *imprimatur* with regard to the Gospel in a pastoral letter to the Church at Rhodus, and announced his intention of making a second visit. From the nature of Serapion's reference to those who supplied him with a copy of the Gospel we gather that it had been in existence for some time, we may say for at least a generation. This takes us back certainly to 160 as the date of the writing of the Gospel.

There is one detail in Serapion's letter which requires special consideration. What precisely was the meaning of his injunction that the Gospel should be read? We may dismiss Zahn's interpretation,⁶⁹ that it referred to the private reading of the book. There was in these early days no *index expurgatorius*,⁷⁰ and the reading of a book by members of the Church for their personal edification was not a matter to arouse feeling. We may accordingly regard it as certain that Serapion's judgment in favour of the Gospel concerned its use as a book for reading in public worship. The important point to determine is whether the bishop was confirming a practice that had been established for some time, or was giving sanction to a proposed innovation. In the former case we should have to think of the Gospel as having been accepted, not certainly with entire unanimity, but still accepted, by an orthodox community of the Church as a book suitable for use in public worship; in the latter case we should infer that another Gospel or Gospels (presumably one or more of those which were later canonized) had been in regular use in the Church services, and that shortly before Serapion's visit an attempt had been made to introduce the Gospel of Peter as an additional lectionary—a new departure which met with serious opposition. Clearly our view of the place which the Gospel held in the estimation of orthodox Christians will be affected, according as the one or the other of those readings of

the situation at Rhodus is adopted. If it be held that the book had been for some time in use as a Church Gospel, Serapion's quick solution of the difficulty which had arisen would be unintelligible, for the character of the Gospel must on that view have been well known to those who objected to it, and they would not have been slow to communicate their opinion of it to the bishop. The slightest suggestion that there was any taint of heresy about the Gospel would have prevented him from being satisfied with skimming its contents and from pronouncing an off-hand judgment. Serapion's letter shows that the question of the doctrinal teaching of the book had not been raised; he distinctly states that during his visit he had no reason to suspect heretical leanings on the part of any of the members in Rhodus. These considerations seem to pronounce decisively in favour of the view that the Gospel of Peter had reached Rhodus a very short time before Serapion's visit, and that the attempt made by Marcianus and those who were of his mind to have it used in church was resented by the majority of the congregation as an objectionable innovation. It was their conservative instinct, their satisfaction with the Gospel (or Gospels) already in use, and not their knowledge of any false teaching in the Gospel of Peter, that inspired their opposition to Marcianus. If this reconstruction of the situation be correct,⁷¹ Serapion's action, though it cannot be commended for its prudence, is at least intelligible. By temperament we may suppose him to have been a man somewhat impatient of old-fashioned people who objected to novelties simply because they were new; in any case what he had to decide was the suitability of the Gospel for public reading, and with his mind closed to any thought of heresy among the members of the Church he had no hesitation, after reading a passage here and there, in sanctioning its use. The conclusion of the matter thus seems to be that the Gospel of Peter was not, as it is frequently assumed to have been, in

regular use in the Church at Rhodus until it was eventually suppressed by Serapion, and accordingly the only clear evidence disappears which was supposed to prove the use of the Gospel by a community of the Greek Church.

Our discussion so far goes to show that Eusebius' judgment of the Gospel as heretical was in accord with the prevailing opinion in the century in which it had its birth. It would not, indeed, have been surprising had this not been the case. For the doctrinal standards of the fourth century were much more rigid than those of the second, and what was counted heretical by Eusebius might very well have passed without censure in orthodox communities of an earlier day. We have, in fact, reason for believing (and the situation at Rhodus confirms the belief) that the docetic traits found in the Petrine fragment, which are by no means pronounced, would have caused no offence to many second-century Christians in catholic circles. It is accordingly all the more significant that the Gospel from the first seems (if our conclusion be correct) never to have secured any standing outside sectarian communities. That, of course, would become easily intelligible if we assume, what is quite possible, that in the portion of the Gospel which has not been preserved the heretical teaching was much more marked.

The conclusion to which we have been led, that the Petrine Gospel was recognized only in circles lying off the main track of the Church's life, would be proved erroneous, if the widely accepted opinion could be substantiated that 'Peter' was known and used by Justin as an authoritative Gospel narrative. It is impossible within our limits to discuss the evidence in detail, but some attempt may be made to indicate what the problem is.

Those who believe that the Gospel of Peter was used by Justin maintain that he expressly refers to it as one of the apostolic *Memoirs* which, as he states in his *First Apology*

(ch. 67), it was customary to read in Christian assemblies at their weekly worship, and further, that there are peculiarities in his description of certain incidents in the evangelic tradition which can be accounted for only on the theory that he was influenced by the presentation in the Petrine Gospel. The former contention is based on a passage in the *Dialogue with Trypho* (ch. 106) where we read : “ When it is said that He (Jesus) changed the name of one of the apostles to Peter, and when it is written in his memoirs that this so happened, as well as that He changed the names of other two brothers, the sons of Zebedee, to Boanerges, which means ‘ sons of thunder,’ this was an announcement of the fact that it was He by whom Jacob was called Israel.” To what writing did Justin refer when he spoke of “ his memoirs ” ? It is admitted that the natural interpretation of the phrase is “ the memoirs of Peter.” But how is that to be understood ? It might seem that the most obvious explanation is that Justin was speaking of the Gospel which bears Peter’s name ; but to assume that he did so is an example of quick thinking, against which we should be on our guard. One fact should suggest caution. The tradition which Papias records that Mark, who was “ the interpreter of Peter,” wrote in his Gospel all that he remembered to have heard from the apostle (Eusebius, *H.E.* iii. 39. 15) could not have been unknown to Justin, and nothing consequently could have been more natural than that he should describe St. Mark’s Gospel as “ Peter’s Memoirs.”⁷² That it was our Second Gospel which he so designated, is supported by the fact that we find the change of the names of Simon and of the sons of Zebedee to which Justin refers duly reported in the third chapter of St. Mark (vv. 16 f.) —a notice not found in any of the other Gospels. In itself this is sufficient to show that more evidence is needed before we are entitled to assume that Justin, in speaking of Peter’s Memoirs, is thinking of the Gospel of Peter. But grant for the sake of

argument that the reference is to that Gospel, and realize the difficulty that at once emerges. If Justin, writing in Rome, was acquainted with 'Peter,' and if as one of the apostolic Memoirs it was used in the public services of the Church, it must have been held in high repute and been widely known: in which case how are we to account for the fact that Serapion had never heard of it until he went to Rhodus, and still more for the fact that a Gospel so highly esteemed in Rome should, as Stanton says, have been "suffered to sink out of sight without leaving a ripple upon the surface of the water?"⁷³ Moreover, on the supposition that Justin's reference is to the Gospel of Peter, we should naturally expect that he would have regarded it as possessing exceptional authority, and would have followed it when it deviated from the Gospels now in the canon. But, as will appear later, this is far from being the case.⁷⁴ These considerations may at least give us pause, before we venture to build any argument on Justin's reference to Peter's Memoirs as to the circulation of the Petrine Gospel and the value attached to it in the second century.

That, however, is not the end of the matter so far as the relation of Justin to the Gospel of Peter is concerned. We may reject the opinion that the Gospel was referred to as the Memoirs of Peter and yet hold that Justin was acquainted with it. For in one or two passages in which he narrates incidents in the Gospel history there is a remarkable similarity between his presentation of them and that which we find in the Petrine fragment. We cannot discuss the passages in detail, but we take one in which the resemblance is most striking. In Justin's *First Apology* (ch. 35) we read: "For, as the prophet said, they mocked Him (*διασύροντες*) and set Him on the judgment seat and said, Judge for us." With this compare the words of 'Peter': "They said, Let us drag along (*σύρωμεν*) the Son of God, . . . and they set Him on a seat of judgment, saying,

Judge righteously, King of Israel." It seems probable that this feature, common to Justin and 'Peter,' of the setting of Jesus on the judgment seat is due to a misunderstanding of the passage in St. John's Gospel (ch. xix. 13) where we read: "When Pilate heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat"—a misunderstanding that does not surprise us when we note that the verb *ἐκάθισεν* in the Johanneine text translated "sat down" may legitimately be construed transitively. But how did Justin and 'Peter' come by this representation on which they are agreed that part of the mockery to which Jesus was subjected was His being treated as a judge? Some relationship there must be between the two authors; the question to decide is what that relationship amounts to. Did Justin use 'Peter,' or was it the other way about? Or did they derive the feature which they have in common from a source open to both of them? There is one consideration which renders improbable a borrowing from 'Peter' on the part of Justin. Justin states that the placing of Jesus on the judgment seat was a fulfilment of prophecy, and a little earlier in the chapter of the *Apology* where that is mentioned he quotes from Isa. lviii. 2: "they now ask of me righteous judgment" (LXX *κρίσιν δικάϊαν*), with the omission, however, of the word "righteous" which is found both in the Hebrew and in the Septuagint. On the other hand, 'Peter' keeps more closely to the prophetic word in giving "Judge righteously." Now if Justin was dependent on 'Peter' for the uncanonical detail that Jesus was mocked by being placed on a seat of judgment, how are we to explain the fact that he left out the word "righteously" which would have brought his statement into precise agreement with the passage in Isaiah which he had quoted loosely? "Is it likely," as Stülcken urges, "that Justin, if he used the Gospel of Peter here and wished to reproduce its narrative, himself discovered the Old

Testament parallel to it, to which he refers, and yet omitted the word which is found in both passages, *δικαίαν*—*δικαίως*? One will hardly find it possible to believe that.”⁷⁵ Again, if, as appears probable, the representation both of Justin and ‘Peter’ goes back ultimately to the passage in Isa. lviii. 2, the retention of the word *δικαίως* by ‘Peter’ is sufficient to show that the author of the Gospel was not dependent on Justin. The only conclusion, accordingly, which is open is that both writers borrowed from a common source. Rendel Harris⁷⁶ was the first to suggest that this common source was a book of *Testimonia*, in which passages from the Old Testament were gathered together, for controversial purposes against the Jews, to prove that the facts of Christ’s life had been foretold by Hebrew prophets. But there is another possible source from which both writers may have drawn, and Justin himself gives us the hint of it. In the same thirty-fifth chapter of his *First Apology* in which he speaks of the setting of Jesus on the judgment seat, after giving a few details of the Crucifixion, he says: “And that these things happened, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate.” What these early Acts of Pilate were is one of the unsolved problems of second-century Christian literature, but there seems to be no valid reason for doubting their existence as a document purporting to give Pilate’s account of the proceedings at the trial and condemnation of Jesus. In the later Pilate literature there are faint reminiscences of the Gospel of Peter, so that we may feel that there is substance in the conjecture that the Acts of Pontius Pilate mentioned by Justin were the common source from which he and the author of the Gospel drew the details in which they agree. In any case, if the resemblances between Justin and ‘Peter’ are, as seems most probable, to be accounted for, not by Justin’s use of the Gospel, but by the theory of a source accessible to both, we are left with no scrap of evidence to show that the Petrine Gospel

arose in the first half of the second century, or that it had a circulation in that century beyond certain mildly heretical circles in Syria where it had its origin.⁷⁷

This must not be taken as a conclusion for which certainty can be claimed, but it possesses a very high degree of probability. The probability is strengthened by a consideration of a general kind which we mention before passing from the question of Justin's relation to the Gospel. We refer to the decided difference in tone between Justin and 'Peter' in their treatment of the experience of Jesus on the cross. The docetic sympathies of the writer of the Gospel are veiled but nevertheless unmistakable, while Justin is everywhere concerned to express the reality of the sufferings of Christ. Thus he writes: "It is recorded in the Memoirs which I say were drawn up by His apostles and those who followed them, that His sweat fell down like drops of blood . . . lest we should say that He who was the Son of God did not actually experience the things which happened to Him" (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 103). 'Peter' makes a significant change in the cry of dereliction, representing Jesus as saying, "My Power, Power, thou hast left me," whereas Justin cites the cry as it is given in St. Mark, "O God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and states almost immediately afterwards that through His agony of soul Jesus showed that "He had in very truth become a suffering man" (*Dialogue*, 99). I believe that Stanton's conclusion is justified, that "one who had so clear a grasp of the truth of our Lord's humanity (as Justin had), and who had, moreover, written a work against the heretics of his time, could hardly have failed to mark a tendency at least to Docetism in the Gospel of Peter," and was not likely to have used it.⁷⁸

If this view be correct, there is nothing in the external evidence that entitles us to put the origin of the Gospel of

Peter higher than the middle of the second century. Nor is there anything in the character of the fragment which suggests an earlier date. If, then, we regard the year 150 as the approximate time of its appearance, there is one inference which we are justified in drawing, namely, that apart from any changes which the author made on the evangelic tradition for apologetic purposes or to express his own interpretation of the facts, his narrative was mainly dependent on written sources. By the middle of the second century the stream of oral tradition had almost completely dried up, and any stories which were current about Jesus, over and above what was known from the Gospels in common use, were unreliable and of inferior worth. If 'Peter' drew from tradition, he was drawing from a troubled source. And although, as we have seen to be probable, he may have used the vanished Acts of Pilate, we are unable to say whether they contained any material of the slightest value. There is nothing indeed to suggest that 'Peter' is an independent witness to the facts of the life of Jesus, and certainly nothing to warrant the judgment of the author of *Supernatural Religion* that in the Gospel we have "a primitive and less crystallized form of the Christian tradition."⁷⁹ For a close examination of the Petrine fragment betrays a manifest literary dependence on the first two canonical Gospels, and we are almost certainly correct in saying that the author drew from all four.⁸⁰ His literary method was free and untrammelled. There was at the period at which he wrote no feeling that the Gospels honoured by the Church were sacred Scripture to be treated with scrupulous respect. They were documents used for religious edification and the nurture of faith, and wherever, as was apt to be the case in outlying districts, aberrations from the prevailing doctrine of the Church arose, there was no hesitation in introducing modifications into the tradition which brought it into conformity with the tastes and

beliefs of the particular community. There cannot, I think, be any question that some of the characteristic features of the Gospel of Peter are due to deliberate changes of this kind, made either by the author himself or by the writer of an uncanonical document used by him. The material which lay before the author in the four Gospels was manipulated in accordance with his strong anti-Jewish bias, his desire to conciliate Roman feeling, his peculiar doctrinal views, and his concern to establish faith in the resurrection of Jesus. He may have had other interests unknown to us which affected his presentation of the Gospel facts, but most of the alterations which he made or adopted in the narrative, as we find it in one or other of the canonical Gospels, are explicable when we keep his personal sympathies in view and take into account the desire for picturesque description and the taste for vivid colouring which characterize the treatment of the primitive Christian tradition by later writers. One fact is evident from the character of the narrative. He had a complete mastery of the material which he used. He was no crude copyist. The details found in the canonical Gospels were so familiar to him that he had perfect freedom in transposing them and in arranging them in new combinations. The peculiarities of one Gospel are discernible here and those of another there. There are displacements of incidents in his narrative; details apparently omitted in the connexion where judging from the canonical Gospels we should expect them to have been found appear in another context. 'Peter' has accordingly a peculiarly mixed character, with the result that the situation as depicted is blurred and indistinct,⁸¹ and what is important to note, the mixture is not one of incidents merely, but of the phraseology of different Gospels.⁸² This latter fact is sufficient to prove that the writer was not drawing from oral tradition which might have combined features that appear in the different

Gospels, but that he was directly dependent on the written Gospels themselves. His Gospel, as one fitting to come from Simon Peter its reputed author, is not a harmony like Tatian's work; it is a new Gospel composed with considerable skill and with the freedom of a writer who knew how to make the most of his material, but it has no claim to the character of an independent history based on sources other than the four Gospels.

The interesting question has been raised whether we do not find in the closing words of the Petrine fragment a trace of the lost original ending of St. Mark's Gospel. As is well known, the last twelve verses of Mark xvi. (vv. 9-20) did not belong to the Gospel in its original form, but were a later addition composed to take the place of the final paragraph which had disappeared. We can only conjecture that after Mark xvi. 8 the evangelist went on to mention the delivery of the angel's message by the women to the disciples (as in Matt. xxviii. 8b) and the departure of the disciples to Galilee where the Risen Lord appeared to them (as in Matt. xxviii. 16 ff.), and that, further, he may have made special mention of Peter in connexion with the Galilean appearance. All this may be inferred with considerable probability from the statements in Mark xiv. 28 ("After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee") and in Mark xvi. 7 ("Tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you"). Now it is interesting to note that the Gospel of Peter evidently closed with the description of an appearance of Christ to certain disciples at the Sea of Galilee, and that the incident is narrated in the first person by Simon Peter. The suggestion was first made by Harnack,⁸³ that the genuine ending of St. Mark had been used by the author of 'Peter,' and this suggestion he supported on the following grounds: (1) That as 'Peter's' description of the women's

visit to the sepulchre follows St. Mark's account somewhat closely and is clearly dependent on it, it was probable that the immediately succeeding narrative also followed St. Mark's lead ; (2) that the incident mentioned at the close of the Petrine fragments points to a narrative describing a Galilean appearance of Christ in which Simon Peter was a central figure—just what one might have expected to find in St. Mark, if the lost ending had been preserved ; and (3) that the Petrine fragment dealing with this incident mentions as one of Simon Peter's companions " Levi the son of Alphæus," the Apostle Matthew, who is called by that name only in St. Mark (ii. 14). In view of these facts, Burkitt, following Harnack, says that " we are not pressing conjecture too far if we gather that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew and used our Gospel according to St. Mark in its original form before it had lost its last leaves." ⁸⁴ If this conclusion were certain, we should have to date the Gospel of Peter much earlier than we have found reason for doing, for by the middle of the second century there is no trace to be found in ecclesiastical writers of St. Mark's original ending, the present ending being used by Tatian in the *Diatessaron* and probably also by Justin.⁸⁵ But the arguments of Harnack are inconclusive. (1) In the case of a writer who uses his sources so freely as the author of the Gospel of Peter does and mingles details from different Gospels, no argument can be drawn with any assurance from his use of a certain source in one passage to his use of the same source in the passage immediately following. (2) That ' Peter ' narrated an appearance of our Lord in Galilee which would answer our expectations as to what St. Mark probably wrote is not decisive, for, on the one hand, St. Matthew's ending, with its Galilean appearance, would also suit the case, and, on the other, the possibility has to be reckoned with that ' Peter ' was influenced in his account of Christ's post-resurrection meeting

with the disciples by the narrative in John xxi. Indeed, if, as there are grounds for believing, the author of 'Peter' made use of all our four Gospels, nothing could seem more probable than that he borrowed from the concluding chapter of the Fourth Gospel the main features of a story that made a fitting close to a Gospel which claimed to be written by the Apostle Peter. (3) If this was so, the mention of Andrew and of Levi as St. Peter's companions (neither of whom is mentioned in John xxi.) can be most easily explained on the supposition that in giving these new details 'Peter,' who would naturally know the precise facts, was supplementing John, who closes his list of Simon Peter's fishing companions with the words "and two other of His disciples." If the names of these two other disciples were to be given, Andrew for one was an obvious choice (Mark i. 16), while Levi, so called in the Gospel of St. Mark, with which 'Peter' was well acquainted, may have been introduced, as von Schubert suggests, from the desire to have the evangelist Matthew as a witness to the Risen Christ's appearance. On the whole, although one must acknowledge that the use of the Marcan lost ending by 'Peter' cannot with certainty be denied, the character of the narrative in the Petrine Gospel generally makes it more probable that the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus which it narrated was based on the Johannine story in ch. xxi.

From these questions of literary criticism, which have been dealt with at considerable length because of their importance in determining the place of the Petrine Gospel in evangelical literature, we now pass to the consideration of the main characteristics of its narrative.

First of all should be noted its *docetic sympathies*. It was this feature in the Gospel which led Serapion to withdraw his permission that it should be read in the Church at Rhodus. In the fragment which we possess it cannot be said that docetic

traits are prominent. The first passage which suggests the writer's leanings towards Docetism contains the statement that on the cross Jesus "*kept silence as in no wise suffering pain*" (ἐσιώπα ὡς μηδὲν πόνον ἔχων). Taken by themselves these words do not necessarily imply a docetic conception of Christ's sufferings; they might mean nothing more, in the light of the well-attested behaviour of martyrs and of the self-control that men have schooled themselves to exhibit when enduring the greatest agonies, than that Jesus in a state of spiritual exaltation triumphed over the sufferings of His body. It is interesting to note that Origen, who was acquainted with the Gospel of Peter, has a probable allusion to this passage and finds no hint of heretical teaching in it.⁸⁶ On the other hand, it seems likely that the author chose an ambiguous form of words which was capable of being interpreted in a docetic sense. This is borne out by other passages, to which we shall refer in a moment, as well as by the significant fact that in the whole narrative there is not the slightest suggestion that on the cross Jesus was enduring any agony of body or soul. The cry "I thirst," recorded in the Fourth Gospel, which bears clear witness to Christ's physical distress during the Crucifixion, is omitted in the Gospel of Peter, although it seems to me to be certain that the writer had the Johannine narrative in his mind. In any case the change which he made in the cry of dereliction as reported in the First and Second Gospels is indubitable evidence that he was conscious of "the offence of the cross." In St. Mark (xv. 34) and in St. Matthew (xxvii. 46) the spiritual anguish through which our Lord passed is reflected in the agonizing cry of sheer bewilderment, as for the moment His vision of God's face was clouded over: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" but in 'Peter' the question, with all that it meant of profound spiritual distress, is altered to a plain statement of fact, "*My Power, Power, thou*

hast left me." It cannot be affirmed with certainty, but it is probable, that these words should be read in the sense that the Divine Being, who was believed by heretics of various shades of opinion to have associated Himself with Jesus at His baptism or at an earlier stage, departed from Him on the cross. That was a common conception among those who held docetic views; in particular, the followers of Valentinus distinguished between a passible and an impassible Christ, and believed that the Divine Power which they identified with the Christ who could not suffer flew up and left Jesus before His death. That the author of the Petrine Gospel shared this view, finds some confirmation in the peculiar expression used with reference to the death of Jesus. After He had uttered the cry of dereliction, "*He was taken up*" (ἀνελήφθη). This expression, it is interesting to observe, is also found in the strongly docetic Acts of John (ch. 102) as describing the departure to heaven of the impassible Christ. It can hardly be doubted that the use of this word, together with the altered form of the cry on the cross, betrays quite unmistakably the author's docetic sympathies.⁸⁷ And yet it is clear from his subsequent narrative that his Docetism is not of the extreme type. Jesus, although deserted by the Divine Power, is still for him "the Lord." It is "the Lord" who is taken down from the cross and laid in Joseph's tomb. We are probably near the truth when we say that the author of the Gospel stood in an intermediate position between the Great Church and undisguised heresy, and that his intention was, in a spirit of compromise, "to propagate a Docetic Christology within the Church from which he had not yet parted company."⁸⁸ That he succeeded in his aim, to some extent at least, is shown by the fact that there was a party in the Church at Rhodus which looked with favour on his Gospel.

Much more prominent than its docetic sympathies is the

feeling which the Petrine Gospel exhibits of *antipathy to the Jews*. The relations between the adherents of Judaism and of Christianity had steadily grown more embittered since apostolic times. Even in the middle of the second century there were Jews and Christians who found it possible to meet on terms of friendliness, as the courteous dialogue between Justin and Trypho shows, but that was probably exceptional, and in any case the dialogue makes it clear how incapable the representatives of the two related faiths were of coming to any understanding. In the earliest days of the Church there were many Jewish Christians who maintained their sense of unity with Judaism by their observance of the national customs, by the keeping of the ceremonial law, and by attendance at the worship of the synagogue. But that state of affairs simply concealed for a time the essential incompatibility of the two faiths which was bound sooner or later to issue in conflict. The first cause of open antagonism was the Christian attitude to the Jewish law in the prosecution of the Gentile mission. As we learn from the Acts of the Apostles and from his own letters (1 Thess. ii. 15 f. ; 2 Cor. xi. 24 f.), St. Paul had to face bitter and systematic opposition on the part of Jews, who, in their endeavour to put an end to his activities, enlisted the Roman authorities on their side. But apart from this ground of conflict the Christian faith in Jesus as the Divinely-appointed Messiah provoked the Jews to uncompromising antagonism. They were wounded at their most sensitive point in being asked to assent to the Messianic claims of one whom the Law pronounced accursed, and when their own Scriptures were brought forward as a testimony in favour of the Christian faith their indignation knew no bounds. We have no records to show how the actual rupture between Judaism and Christianity came about, but it was in the nature of things inevitable. The destruction of Jerusalem probably precipitated the crisis.

Christians whose own hopes were shaken by the calamity which had befallen the Holy City regarded it as a Divine punishment of the Jews for their treatment of Christ. The excommunication of Christians followed; their writings were condemned, and they themselves were cursed daily in the synagogues. This is the situation which we find reflected in the Fourth Gospel. Confession of Christ leads to excommunication (ch. ix. 22, 34), and "the Jews" who have deliberately turned their backs on the light are regarded as the representatives of unbelief. Jewish hatred found a further outlet in the most scurrilous attacks on the Christian faith; calumnies of the grossest kind were spread abroad about the birth of Jesus, and the resurrection, which was a central fact of Christian preaching, was declared to be a fiction for which credence had been gained by the disciples' theft of the body of Jesus from the tomb. The truculent feeling shown towards Christians became more intense at the time of the Bar-Cochba rebellion (132-135), and was exhibited in acts of cruel persecution, because, as was natural in a Jewish Messianic movement, the followers of Jesus held aloof.⁸⁹ It is not surprising, in view of all this, that Christians who had not learned of their Master to love their enemies retaliated in a bitter spirit.

It is quite clearly in an atmosphere in which Christian feeling was inflamed against the Jews that the Gospel of Peter was written. When we read the Passion narratives in the canonical Gospels, it is noteworthy that in none of them, not even in the Fourth Gospel, do we find any marked trace of anti-Jewish sentiment. But in the Petrine Gospel every opportunity is seized to represent the Jews in the worst possible light. They, and they alone, are made responsible for the death of Jesus. Every act of indignity done to Him is put to their account. They, and not the Roman soldiers, clothed Him with purple and crowned Him with thorns, and scourged Him

and carried out the act of crucifixion.⁹⁰ They were so lost to all feelings of humanity that, enraged by the words spoken by one of the malefactors, they left him to die in torment, instead of hastening his end by breaking his legs, as the custom was. They filled up their crimes by giving Jesus poison to drink. They sought to imprison the disciples on the trumped-up charge that they were plotting to burn the temple. They were made to bear witness to their own guilt by calling Woe upon themselves for the nefarious deed which they had wrought. Into the mouth of their leaders the impious saying is put that they would rather be guilty of a very great sin against God than fall into the hands of the enraged populace. To find in so short a section of the Gospel so many unmistakable indications of anti-Jewish feeling is a clear proof that it was one of the dominant motives of the whole book.

Associated with this marked antipathy to the Jews is the evident desire of the writer to show that *the Roman governor had no responsibility for the death of Jesus*. This is in direct contradiction to the accounts given in the canonical Gospels. Certainly the earlier Gospel tradition makes it plain that the sympathies of Pilate were on the side of Jesus, and that it was with reluctance and after vain efforts made to save Him that he yielded to the pressure of Jewish feeling in sanctioning His crucifixion, but it is never suggested that Pilate had no responsibility in the matter. In St. Mark it is observed that Pilate, knowing that "the chief priests had delivered Jesus for envy" (xv. 10), endeavoured to secure His release by appealing past the Jewish authorities to the people, who, according to custom at the Passover, looked for a prisoner to be set free at their request. When this endeavour failed, Pilate gave way before the popular clamour and handed over Jesus to be crucified. In the later canonical Gospels we discern a manifest inclination to set the conduct of Pilate in a still more favourable light. In

St. Matthew the governor, whose desire to liberate Jesus was strengthened by his wife's appeal (xxvii. 19), finding that the tumultuous crowd was not to be moved from its demand, delivered Jesus to His fate, but only after he had washed his hands and protested that the responsibility of shedding innocent blood did not rest on his shoulders (xxvii. 24). St. Luke goes still farther in emphasizing Pilate's sympathy with Jesus and in minimizing his guilt. In the first instance he eagerly seized an opportunity to transfer the trial of Jesus to Herod, and when the matter was referred back to him he showed his desire three times (xxiii. 16, 20, 22) to set Jesus at liberty. With the object of placating the bloodthirsty crowd, he offered to scourge Jesus; but when this offer was refused, he "gave sentence that it should be as they required." In the Fourth Gospel Pilate is represented as being without reserve on Jesus' side. Repeatedly he declared that he found no fault in Him (xviii. 38, xix. 4, 6); he made several attempts to reason with the crowd and to win them to a less truculent mind, and it was only a veiled but unmistakable threat on the part of the Jews to denounce the governor before Cæsar for his defence of a man accused of high treason that led Pilate to surrender to their will. There can be no reasonable doubt that in this progressive development of the primitive tradition recorded in St. Mark as to the part which Pilate played in the trial and condemnation of Jesus an apologetic motive was at work. The increasing emphasis laid on the obduracy of the Jewish populace in demanding the crucifixion of Jesus and on Pilate's efforts to set Him at liberty, was due in some measure perhaps to the bitterness of Christians against the Jews to which reference has been made, but still more to the desire, which found definite expression in the writings of the apologists in the second century, to conciliate Roman opinion and to win for Christianity the tolerance and sympathy which were so often denied it. In the Gospel

of Peter we find ourselves at a well advanced stage of this apologetic movement. Pilate is now relieved of all responsibility whatsoever in the condemnation of Jesus. Not only did he wash his hands, as is recorded in St. Matthew, but he withdrew from the proceedings against Jesus altogether. Herod and the Jewish authorities were Christ's judges. On them alone lay the guilt of condemning Him to death. So decided was Pilate's refusal to have anything further to do with the matter that he left the disposal of the body of Jesus to Herod. Roman soldiers took no part in the crucifixion; it was only at the request of the Jewish authorities that they furnished a guard to watch over the tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid. Moreover, Pilate's Christian sympathies are plainly suggested when we read that Joseph of Arimathæa was "the friend of Pilate and of the Lord." After the resurrection he declared that he was "clean from the blood of the Son of God." Indeed it is hardly too much to say that in the Gospel of Peter Pilate is represented as being "a Christian at heart" (*pro sua conscientia Christianus*: Tertullian, *Apol.* 21). What more could the Roman authorities in the second century desire to convince them that Christianity was worthy of their benevolent regard, than the assurance that the governor before whom the case of Jesus was brought was altogether friendly to Christianity and refused to have any part in the crime of putting Jesus to death?

The chief apologetic aim of the writer of the Gospel, however, was to put beyond dispute *the reality of the resurrection of Jesus*. This was one of the burning questions in the controversy of Christians with Jews, and indeed was a matter which caused difficulty to some within the Church itself. Very early, as we gather from St. Matthew's Gospel (xxvii. 64), the story was current among the Jews that the disciples had removed the body of Jesus from the tomb and had thus succeeded in per-

suading even the incredulous to accept the resurrection of Jesus as a fact. The author of the Petrine Gospel elaborates the canonical account and multiplies details to show how utterly impossible such an act of deception was. Every precaution was taken to prevent the removal of the body. The Jewish authorities themselves—elders and scribes—rolled a very great stone to the mouth of the sepulchre and sealed it with seven seals, and with a company of Roman soldiers whom they had begged from Pilate they kept guard. The inquisitive crowds which flocked to the place of burial saw how secure the sepulchre had been made. Sentries were posted and were on duty night and day ; the removal of the body under cover of the darkness (Matt. xxvii. 64) was out of the question. The captain of the guard and the elders were in a tent close by. In these circumstances what could the disciples have done ? They were, in fact, not in a position to do anything, for they were in hiding, with the Jews searching for them because, as was alleged, they intended to burn down the temple. But not only did the Gospel make clear that the Jewish slander about the theft of Christ's body was false : it gave unimpeachable evidence of the fact of the resurrection. As has been already mentioned, ' Peter,' unlike the four evangelists, describes the actual rising of Jesus from the dead. There is a certain majesty in the description—the descent of the angelic beings in a blaze of light, and the heavenly voice which addressed Jesus as He came forth from the tomb ; but what gives the narrative significance, in view of the objection urged by opponents of Christianity that Jesus after His resurrection should have appeared not to His followers only but to His enemies and to others who were not prejudiced, is the statement that Christ's rising was witnessed by the Roman soldiers and by the Jewish elders who were on watch at the sepulchre. And not only so, but Pilate was immediately apprized of the marvellous event and showed no disinclination

to doubt it; while the elders, who feared that the knowledge of the resurrection would infuriate the crowd against them, begged that the soldiers should be commanded to say nothing of the things they had seen. This conspiracy of silence explained why none but Christian disciples had borne testimony to the resurrection, but that it had actually occurred was guaranteed by the astonishing things which both Jews and pagans had witnessed on the morning of Easter day. This was the answer which the author of the Petrine Gospel gave to the objection expressed in the words of Celsus: "If Jesus desired to show that His power was really divine, He ought to have appeared to those who had treated Him ill and to him who had condemned him and to all men universally,"⁹¹ and if the facts had been as the writer of the Gospel stated, the answer would have been complete. It hardly requires to be said that the account with all its details is fiction in the interest of Christian apologetic. This method of obviating the difficulties of faith makes a most unpleasant impression, and it is hard for us to appreciate the state of mind in Christian writers which led them, apparently with a clear conscience, to resort to it. The most that can be said is that their conviction of the truth of the resurrection was so firmly rooted that they believed that events which were necessary to repel every objection *must* have happened. For those whose attitude to history was altogether different from ours, it was a short step from this position to the statement that they actually did happen. In any case it is undeniable that in early Christian times no reluctance was shown by various writers in the invention of details to meet the denials of unbelievers that our Lord had risen from the dead.⁹²

A marked feature of the Gospel is the author's *delight in the supernatural*. This was intelligible in one living in an age when men associated divinity almost exclusively with marvellous and portentous events. The temporary darkness

which covered the land during the crucifixion of Jesus has its extraordinary character emphasized. "It was midday, and darkness covered all Judæa, and they were troubled and distressed lest the sun should have set since He was still alive. . . . Many went about with lamps, thinking that it was night." But when Jesus was taken down from the cross, "the sun shone out and it was found to be the ninth hour." There is a detail conceived with genuine poetic feeling that the earthquake referred to in Matt. xxvii. 51 occurred when the body of Jesus was laid on the ground. It is, however, in his description of the resurrection that the writer finds his chief opportunity for the introduction of marvellous events. A great voice is heard from heaven; the heavens are opened, and two men of super-human stature descend in shining splendour and approach the tomb, from which the stone rolls away without being touched. The heavenly beings enter the tomb and soon afterwards come forth leading One more majestic than themselves, and following them is the cross, "no longer a tree of shame but a symbol of victory."⁹³ Again there is a voice from heaven which says, "Hast Thou preached to them that sleep?" And the Cross answers, "Yes." I think we must feel that the story is impressively told, and as we may gather from a somewhat similar description in the *Ascension of Isaiah*,⁹⁴ Christian thought in the second century was accustomed to conceive the resurrection of Jesus in the imagery of Jewish apocalypse.

In the words uttered by the heavenly voice we have a reference to an idea which had a peculiar fascination for the minds of early Christians—*The Descent of Christ into Hades*. It is a subject too large for discussion here, and we must be content to indicate the main points round which Christian thought moved.⁹⁵ For those whose ideas of the future life were moulded by Jewish apocalyptic the death of Jesus necessarily implied the descent of His soul to the underworld (Rom. x. 7; Eph.

iv. 9), which was conceived as a realm where judgment had already taken place and different regions were set apart for the pious and for the wicked (cf. Luke xvi. 22 f.). Here the souls of men awaited the day of resurrection. The first suggestion in Christian literature that Christ was regarded as fulfilling a ministry during His sojourn in the intermediate state is found in First Peter, where He is represented as preaching to "the spirits in prison" (iii. 19), or, more generally, as declaring the Gospel to those who were dead (iv. 6). The extent, character, and aim of Christ's preaching in Hades were variously conceived by early Christian writers, but it seems clear from the passage in 1 Peter that the author of the Epistle put no limits to Christ's redemptive activity, and believed that through it the most notorious sinners of bygone days could become partakers in the blessings of salvation. Later writers, like Clement of Alexandria, held that the object of Christ's descent to the underworld was to preach the Gospel to all men, both Jews and Gentiles, that all who believed might be saved (*Strom.* vi. 44 ff.). But it is probable, as Schmidt urges, that the earliest conception of Christ's ministry in Hades was more restricted, and that it had its origin in the concern of Christians for the saints of the Old Testament. With their conviction that they were the heirs of the Old Testament promises and that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ was the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the early Christians were bound to face the question as to the destiny of the Old Testament patriarchs and saints. It was an incredible thought that they who had believed in God should be excluded from the Divine kingdom which they had wistfully looked for, and accordingly it was conceived to have been Christ's object, when He descended to the abodes of the pious in the underworld, to give the saints of Israel the assurance of salvation by the bestowal of His forgiveness. He did not go to convert or to preach the

Gospel to all indiscriminately ; He went to complete the salvation of those who had greeted His advent from afar. Whether the passage in the Gospel of Peter, "Hast Thou preached to them that sleep?" is to be understood only of a ministry of Christ to the Old Testament saints cannot be decided, but it is probable in the light of other second century documents that the words should be interpreted in that sense. Justin, as we know from the *Dialogue with Trypho* (ch. 45), was persuaded that the saints of Israel would participate in the salvation mediated through Christ, and he, as well as Irenæus a generation later, found warrant for their faith in Christ's ministry to the Old Testament believers in an apocryphal prophetic saying : "The Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, remembered His dead who slept in the dust of the tomb, and He descended to them to bring them glad tidings of His salvation."⁹⁶ In the *Epistola Apostolorum* the belief in Christ's saving activity in the underworld is shown to rest on a revelation of the Risen Lord. "I descended to the place of Lazarus and preached to the righteous and to the prophets, that they might come out of the resting-place which is below and ascend to that which is above. With my right hand I have poured out on them (the water) of life and forgiveness and deliverance from all evil as I have done to you and to those who believe in me."⁹⁷ Into other developments of the conception of Christ's ministry in the underworld we need not enter. It may simply be stated that along with Christ's preaching in the abodes of the pious there was very early associated, as the passage last quoted suggests, an actual work of deliverance, whereby the souls of the righteous were immediately set free from the dominion of Hades and arose with Christ to enjoy the blessedness of the heavenly rest. There is a trace of this idea in Matt. xxvii. 52 f. : "Many bodies of the saints arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection." We find the same thought finely expressed in the second-century

Odes of Solomon, notably in Ode 42, part of which runs as follows :

“ The underworld saw Me and was troubled,
And Death cast Me out and many with Me.
I was gall and bitterness to him
And I descended with him to his lowest depths.
His feet and his head became feeble
For they could not endure the sight of My face.
And I made a gathering of the living among his dead
And spoke to them with living lips
That My words might not be in vain.
And those who were dead hastened to Me and called and said,
' Have pity on us, Thou Son of God, and deal with us after Thy loving-kindness ;
Lead us out from the bonds of darkness
And open the door for us through which we may come to Thee,
For we see that our Death does not come nigh Thee ;
Let us be delivered with Thee, for Thou art our Deliverer.'
And I heard their voice
And wrote My name on their head
Because they are free and belong to Me.”

This deliverance of righteous souls was a prominent feature in all later representations of the *Descensus*. As an example we may quote from the mediæval *Anaphora Pilati*, which seems to have some connexion with the Gospel of Peter. “ On the first day of the week, about the third hour of the night, the sun was seen as it had never shone before, and all the heaven was brightened. And even as lightnings come in a storm, so certain men of lofty stature, in splendid apparel and of glory indescribable, appeared in the air, and a countless host of angels crying aloud and saying, Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace, goodwill among men ; come up from Hades, ye who are enslaved in the depths of Hades. And at their voice all the mountains and hills were moved, and the rocks were rent, and great chasms were made in the earth, so that the very places of the abyss were visible. And amid the terror

dead men were seen rising again. . . . And all the multitude walked about and sang hymns to God, saying, The Lord our God who hath risen from the dead hath made the dead to live, and Hades He hath spoiled and slain."

One other matter may be referred to shortly in closing this discussion of the Petrine Gospel. Several scholars of distinction have given their adhesion to the view that the fragment of the *Apocalypse of Peter* which was found along with the Gospel fragment in the Akhmîm text does not belong to a separate work, but is an integral part of the Gospel of Peter.⁹⁸ This may be regarded as a possibility, but I do not think that it can be put higher than that. The occurrence of the phrase "we, the twelve disciples," in the two fragments along with other slight coincidences, the prominence given in both to Peter the reputed author who speaks in the first person, and the fact that both fragments are found in one MS. with a lacuna between, suggesting as a possible explanation that the transcriber was copying parts of a single work which had come to him in a defective state, are somewhat slender grounds for the view that the Gospel of Peter closed with the revelations of the Risen Lord recorded in the apocalyptic fragment. It may be regarded as highly probable that a Gospel bearing Peter's name would deal with the earthly ministry of Christ—Origen's reference to "the brethren of Jesus" supports this—and was written with the purpose of supplanting in some particular community the earlier Gospels current in the Church; in which case it was not likely to have departed so far from the Synoptic type as to add a revelation of Heaven and Hell given to the disciples after the resurrection.⁹⁹

The contents of the apocalyptic fragment which cannot here be discussed are as follows: (1) A prophecy of the coming of false prophets; (2) the appearance of two of the faithful

departed, followed by a description of Paradise seen by Peter in a vision ; (3) a description of Hell in which the lost souls are tortured by punishments obviously suggesting the character of their wrongdoing. Two extracts may be given. First, the vision of Paradise : “ The Lord showed me a very great region outside this world exceedingly resplendent with light, and the air that was there illumined by rays of the sun, and the earth itself blooming with unfading flowers, and full of spices and fair-flowering plants, incorruptible and bearing blessed fruit ; and so strong was the perfume that it was borne even to us from thence. And the inhabitants of that place were clad in a robe of angels of light, and their raiment was like their land, and angels ran about them there. And the glory of the inhabitants there was equal, and with one voice they praised the Lord God, rejoicing in that place.” Second, a portion of the vision of Hell : “ I saw also another place over against that, very squalid, and it was a place of punishment ; and they that were being punished there and the angels who were punishing had their raiment dark, according to the air of the place. And some were there hanging by the tongue, and these were they who blaspheme the way of righteousness, and there was under them a fire blazing and tormenting them. And there was a great lake filled with blazing mire, in which were men who pervert righteousness, and tormenting angels were set upon them. And there were others, women, hung by the hair above that mire that bubbled up, and these were they who had adorned themselves for adultery ; and they who were partners with them in the defilement of adultery were hanging by the feet, and they had their heads in the mire, and all were saying, We believed not that we should come to this place. And I saw the murderers and them that had conspired with them cast into a certain narrow place full of evil reptiles and being smitten by those beasts and wallowing

there thus in that torment; and there was set upon them worms as it were clouds of darkness. And the souls of them that had been murdered were standing and searching out the punishment of those murderers, and saying, O God, righteous is Thy judgment. . . .”

CHAPTER IV.

GNOSTIC GOSPELS.

EARLY Church writers bear witness to the existence of many Gospels among the adherents of Gnostic schools. Referring to the Marcosians, Irenæus states (*Hær.* i. 20. 1) that "they adduce an unspeakable number of apocryphal and spurious writings which they themselves have fabricated to the bewilderment of the foolish," and from the passage immediately following it is apparent that he has mainly in view narratives dealing with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. It is well known that Irenæus regarded the number of Gospels as established in the very nature of things; ¹⁰⁰ there could be only four, neither more nor less; and thus we find him, after affirming this conviction, bringing it as a charge against the followers of Valentinus that "they boast that they possess more Gospels than there really are" (*Hær.* iii. 11. 9). "Indeed (he goes on to say) they have arrived at such a pitch of audacity as to entitle their comparatively recent writing 'The Gospel of Truth,' although it agrees in nothing with the Gospels of the apostles." Similarly, the Latin version of Origen's Homily on Luke i. 1 testifies to the large number of Gospels in use among heretics (*ecclesia quattuor euangelia habet, hæresis plurima*), while a century later Epiphanius (*Hær.* 26) states that the number ran into thousands, which is, of course, a gross exaggeration. Of all these heretical Gospels comparatively little has been preserved. The Church took care, when she

gained her hard-won victory over Gnosticism, that the obnoxious writings were destroyed. When she had beaten the enemy, she burned his camp. In dealing with Gnostic representations of the Gospel we are thus largely dependent on the notices of the ecclesiastical opponents of heresy; fortunately they preserve enough to give us a very fair idea of the way in which Gnostics treated the evangelic tradition. Later Gnostic works like *Pistis Sophia* and the Books of Jeû, which arose in Egypt about the middle or end of the third century, no doubt embody older material and enable us to form some judgment of the character of the esoteric teaching of earlier Gnosticism.

It will be desirable at the outset to have some picture in our minds of the movement which formed an alliance with Christianity and gave rise to the Gnosticism of the second century. We need not concern ourselves with the fusion of mythologies out of which it sprang, nor shall we attempt to enter into the abstruse and fantastic details of the speculations to which it gave birth; what is to our purpose is to grasp the main ideas which characterized the movement and formed what has been called by Reitzenstein "Hellenistic Theology." This theology in its broad features was an eclectic body of thought, due to the religious commingling of East and West—an amalgam of Greek metaphysic and Oriental mysticism. Hellenistic thinkers were face to face with the age-long problems which had baffled the human mind—the problem of evil, the problem of the spiritual inequalities among men—and they sought to find an explanation for them in transactions in the unseen world. Unquestionably there is something impressive in the conception of the great drama enacted within the upper world of light, by which they sought to interpret the mystery of existence. At the basis of their theology is a metaphysical dualism; on the one hand the Absolute Deity, unnameable, passionless, incomprehensible, and on the other the material

world in which men live. Between the two there was a great gulf fixed. Hellenistic theology was an attempt to bridge this gulf, to bring into relation the pure Eternal Being and man whose spirit was a spark of divinity imprisoned in the impure world of sense. This was achieved by a theory of emanations¹⁰¹ from the Supreme God in a descending series of pairs (syzygies), each of them separated farther than the one preceding from the original source of life. Within this divine community which made up the Pleroma—the fulness of the Godhead—there came the tragedy of a Fall. One of the lower divine existences, Sophia, tempted as was commonly supposed through pride of heart to pierce the secrets of the supernal light, was for her presumption cast out of the Pleroma and sank into the nether abyss of darkness, and as a result of her fall the world was created out of the primeval chaos through the instrumentality of her son, the Demiurge. In this cosmos so created man received his being; he was not wholly material like the evil world in which he lived; there was a spiritual essence in him which was derived from Sophia and thus belonged to the pure and transcendent world of light.¹⁰² Within him dwelt two irreconcilable opposites continually at war, so that his soul was torn betwixt two, like the charioteer in Plato's allegory who drove two winged steeds, the one of which endeavoured to raise him aloft while the other dragged him to the ground (*Phædrus*, 246).

The evil fate of man did not lie merely in the fact that his spirit was imprisoned in a material and impure world; he was also in bondage to demonic powers. Enclosing the world and separating it from the upper world of light there were seven spheres ruled by the sun, the moon, and five planets. Man's life was under the dominion of the stars; conceived as personal spirits, they were the rulers of this world (κοσμοκράτορες) to which reference is made in Eph. vi. 12—a hierarchy of

powers hostile to man with the prince of the power of the air at their head, whose domination crushed the human soul under the iron heel of necessity.¹⁰³ Thus enthralled in an alien world of sense and subject to malign planetary influences which denied it freedom, the soul yearned for redemption and deliverance.

Hellenistic theology centred in the doctrine of redemption. True life for man meant escape from the bondage of material things, a safe passage through the territories of malignant powers, and a return to the true home of the soul in the heavenly light. That deliverance came through *gnosis* (knowledge). This "knowledge" was conceived not as intellectual perception of truth—at least not directly—but as vision and mystical union with God. We are prone to judge of Gnosticism by its fantastic cosmogonies and abstruse speculations, whereas what is essential in it is this doctrine of gnosis by which salvation is found in mystic fellowship with God. The language of the Fourth Gospel has a specifically Christian content, but formally it is pure Gnostic doctrine: "this is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (xvii. 3). The knowledge of God is not an achievement of the human mind; it has Divine revelation as its counterpart. Man, who by nature cleaves to the earthly, acquires enlightenment through grace. It is a gift of God which stirs his heart to praise. Thus we read in a Gnostic prayer which stands at the close of the *Λόγος τέλειος* of the Papyrus Mimaut, found also in a Latin translation in the "Asclepius" of Pseudo-Apuleius: "We give Thee thanks, Most High, that we through Thy goodness have received this light of knowledge . . . for Thou hast endowed us with reason and spirit and knowledge, with reason that we may know Thee, with spirit that we may follow after Thee, with knowledge that knowing Thee we may rejoice. Redeemed by Thee, we

rejoice that Thou hast wholly revealed Thyself unto us ; we rejoice that through the vision of Thee Thou hast made us, while we are in our earthly body, divine. For this alone is the rapture of men, that they know Thy majesty. . . . In all our entreaty we humbly ask Thee only for one thing : be pleased to keep us stedfast in the knowledge of Thee, and let us not fall away from the manner of this life." ¹⁰⁴

The knowledge of God is never perfectly realized on earth ; salvation accordingly cannot be fully attained until the soul has been delivered from the prison-house. On earth there is merely progress towards deliverance through the divine vision and through the soul's detachment from worldly concerns. That involved an ascetic morality, although in some instances the " spiritual " man's indifference to his physical nature led him to the opposite extreme of libertinism. The soul was further prepared for redemption by an elaborate ritual, by lustrations, anointings, and sacramental meals.

At death the soul that had received the knowledge of God had to pass through the seven spheres ruled by the demons on its way to the world of light. For the perils of this journey to the Ogdoad (the eighth region), the realm of light beyond the starry spheres, gnosis had made provision. It had equipped the soul with magic words, at the utterance of which the demons shrank back affrighted and left the way open for the passage of the redeemed.

It is not quite clear whether in this imposing system of theology there was a personal Redeemer. Mr. Edwyn Bevan says : " In those fragments which we have of Hellenistic theology, unmodified by the influence of Christian faith in a human person, there is no Redeemer ; he is absent from the doctrine of Posidonius ; he is absent from the Hermetic writings. And why is he needed ? for the possession of knowledge is enough to enable the soul to regain its heavenly home, whether

by knowledge be understood intellectual enlightenment in the higher Platonic sense, or knowledge of magical formulæ and mystic practices in the baser superstitious acceptance. . . . This magical apparatus seems something sufficient in itself, if it really works, without a Redeemer.”¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, it is contended that the *ὄρος σταυρός*, a heavenly being who in Hellenistic theology had the double function of guarding the boundary of the Pleroma and of giving stability to it, was the pre-Christian form of the Redeemer. “The pre-Christian Redeemer has the essential features of the Philonic Logos, for to the latter also, standing between the Creator and the creature, the function is committed of bounding and separating both. He too is the *ὄρος* (Boundary) between the spiritual world and the world of sense. As the Stauros mediates between the Pleroma and Sophia, so he, as mediator, stands between God and humanity in need of redemption. This agreement shows us how little in the Gnostic picture of the Redeemer one requires to set to the account of Christianity. The Son of the supreme God who descends from the heavenly world in order to save the divine fallen soul, the mediator between God and the world who embodies in himself the image of the First Father and so becomes His revealer, is a pre-Christian figure. The only intellectual achievement which the Christian Gnostic who had grown up amid these religious-philosophical speculations had to carry through, was the setting forth of the assertion: Jesus Christ is the *ὄρος σταυρὸς Σωτήρ* who appeared on earth.”¹⁰⁶ On the whole it appears probable that Hellenistic theology did reckon with a personal Redeemer; but if this was the case, his function was simply that of a revealer. From the world of light he had descended through the seven spheres that he might reascend after giving the secret gnosis to the spiritual. Through his reascent he opened the kingdom of heaven to the soul that had been in prison.

Now into the orbit of this magico-mystical religion of redemption there came the Christian Gospel with its message of salvation through Jesus Christ. In it there was a power too great to be ignored. Had the syncretistic movement represented by Hellenistic theology gone on its way undisturbed, uninfluenced by the appearance of Christianity, that would have suggested some unfitness in it to be the universal religion, inasmuch as the most earnest minds of the age found nothing in it to appeal to them. As it was, they were so deeply impressed that the Christian Saviour was introduced into their complex of thought. This is seen simply and beautifully expressed in the words of the Naassene Hymn which speaks of the soul "like a trembling deer" seeking for life in vain.

"Then said Jesus: Behold, O Father,
This creature wandering on the earth, afflicted by evils,
Far from Thy house.
It seeks to escape the bitter chaos
And knows not how to flee from it.
Wherefore send me, O Father!
With the seals in my hand I will descend;
I will pass through all the æons;
All mysteries will I disclose
And the forms of the gods I will show;
The secret of the holy way
I will impart, calling it Gnosis."

Thus arose Christian Gnosticism which, as Edwyn Bevan truly says, "was not a wanton perversion, a wanton sophistication, of a clearly articulated orthodox theology, but an attempt made by men, who had received the Church's teaching when its intellectual expression was still more or less wavering and tentative, to combine that teaching with conceptions and aspirations prevalent in the Gentile world whence they had come."¹⁰⁷ The significance of the whole Gnostic movement within the Church was "not that the Christian had lapsed into

the pagan, but rather that the victory of Christianity over paganism had begun." ¹⁰⁸

With their dualistic philosophy the Gnostics experienced great difficulty in fitting the Christian Redeemer into their scheme of things. They endeavoured to surmount the difficulty in various ways. On one point all schools were agreed; the Heavenly Being who had descended for man's redemption could not have entered into any direct relation with the impure material world. Incarnation in any real sense was excluded. It was impossible to admit the identity of the Divine Saviour and the Jesus of history. The most radical method of effecting a combination of Gnostic conceptions with the evangelic tradition was to deny outright the reality of the human life of Jesus. That was Marcion's way. The Redeemer had not entered the world through a human birth. He had simply appeared from heaven in the fulness of His power, and the whole of His life on earth was phantasmal and unreal. The Crucifixion was a mere illusion, a piece of stage play which deceived the ignorant multitude. Another method which seemed to do less violence to the facts of history was to conceive the human nature of Jesus as something altogether unique, and this was followed by the members of the Valentinian school. Irenæus (*Hær.* i. 6. 1), describing their views, says: "They affirm that . . . He was invested with a body endowed with a psychical nature, yet constructed with unspeakable skill, so that it might be visible and tangible and capable of enduring suffering: but at the same time they deny that He assumed anything material, since matter was incapable of salvation." Accordingly the birth of Jesus was acknowledged by the Valentinians, but was so conceived that His body derived from His mother no material substance. He "passed through Mary just as water passes through a pipe" (Irenæus, *Hær.* i. 7. 2). But in whatever way the human nature of Jesus was regarded (and there were

many subtle shades of opinion), one feature was constant in every theory which did not represent His humanity as an illusion : the Heavenly Christ was distinct from the earthly Jesus. There had been a temporary coalescence of the two persons, with the result that a composite being, Jesus-Christ, had come into existence. The stage at which this union had taken place was variously conceived, the usual view being that the Divine Christ had descended from heaven and entered into the human Jesus at His baptism ; but in some quarters there was a disposition, in a spirit of larger accommodation to the doctrine of the Church, to throw back the union to His childhood or His birth. The Crucifixion resolved the composite personality once more into its component parts. Suffering was incompatible with divinity ; accordingly at the Cross the Divine Saviour separated from Jesus and returned to heaven whence He had come.

The early Gospels in which the Gnostics set forth their esoteric teaching on the person and work of Christ have disappeared, leaving only a few meagre fragments, and in the foregoing account we have been dependent on the information given in ecclesiastical writers. The extant fragments, however, warrant us in assuming that for the most part Gnostic Gospels dealt with revelations given by the Risen Christ to chosen disciples, in which the true meaning of His life and teaching was disclosed. The choice of the post-resurrection period was not due merely to the desire for a freedom which the writers could not have had if they had placed their narrative in the same framework as the Gospels of the Church ; it was in accordance with the fitness of things, from their point of view, that knowledge of the deeper mysteries should be communicated by the Saviour when He was set free from association with a material world. Strictly speaking, there was no place for the resurrection in the Gnostic scheme of thought ; the higher

Christ when He separated from Jesus on the cross departed to the world of light. Nevertheless in most Gnostic systems the resurrection was retained, although no redemptive significance was attached to it. This inconsequence in the thinking of the Gnostics was no doubt attributable to the strength of the evangelic tradition; but in any case the tradition served their purpose, for was it not written that after the resurrection Christ spoke to His disciples of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God?" (Acts i. 3). The importance attached to the revelations of the Risen Christ led to the lengthening of the time between the resurrection and the ascension. The "forty days" of the Book of Acts became in some sects eighteen months,¹⁰⁹ and according to *Pistis Sophia* and the Books of Jeû, Christ's ascension did not follow until the twelfth year after the resurrection. In this extended period the Risen Lord entered on a fresh ministry, in which He gave to the disciples capable of understanding them revelations of the mysteries hidden from the discernment of the vulgar. The writings containing this secret gnosis are accordingly better described as Gospel-Apocalypses than as Gospels.

It was a feature of these post-resurrection Gospels that the revelations were conveyed in the form of conversations between Christ and disciples who came to Him seeking enlightenment on matters about which they were perplexed. Among those who thus received the secret gnosis women were prominent; in *Pistis Sophia* a considerable part deals with the questions of Mary and the unveiling of mysteries to which they were directed. An extract from the beginning of a Gnostic Gospel entitled "The Sophia (Wisdom) of Jesus Christ" will show the sort of question which troubled the disciples. "After His resurrection from the dead His twelve disciples and seven women, His disciples, betook themselves to Galilee to the hill that is called . . ., since they were in perplexity about the

substance of the universe and the (Divine) economy and the holy Providence and the virtue of the powers, and about all things which the Saviour had experienced with them, the mysteries and the holy economy. Then the Saviour revealed Himself to them, not in His earlier form, but in the invisible spirit. His form was that of a great angel of light ; His nature was indescribable ; and He had no flesh on Him which dies, but pure and perfect flesh . . . He said, Peace be with you ; My peace I give to you. And they all wondered and were afraid.” Thereupon at Christ’s command the disciples laid their doubts and questionings before Him and received the guidance which they desired.¹¹⁰

The general character of the Gnostic Gospel Apocalypses may be best learned from the third century *Pistis Sophia*. This book, which is a compilation from earlier writings, is characterized by occult cosmological speculations, cabalistic lore, and weird mythological fancies, and of them we say nothing, but it is interesting to hear what it has to say of Jesus. Seated with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, eleven years after the resurrection, the Saviour revealed the secret of His human birth. “ It came to pass that I looked down upon the world of mankind at the command of the First Mystery and found Mary, who is called my mother according to the material body. I spoke to her in the form of Gabriel, and when she had turned to the Height toward me, I placed in her the first power which I had received from Barbelo, that is, the body which I had borne in the heights. And in place of the soul I placed in her the power which I had received from the great Sabaoth, the Good One who dwells in the region of the Right.” Somewhat later the Saviour describes His ascent through the hostile spheres, clad in a garment of glory, and the dismay which His coming brought to the principalities and powers. “ They were thrown in confusion against one another, and great fear fell upon them

when they saw the great light that was in me. And their great confusion and great fear reached to the region of the great invisible Forefather and the three great triple Powers." A strange passage tells of the union of the Heavenly Christ with Jesus in His childhood. The revelation is put into the mouth of Mary, who says: "My Lord, concerning the word which Thy power prophesied through David, 'Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other; Truth hath flourished on the earth, and Righteousness hath looked down from heaven.' So hath aforetime Thy power of this word prophesied concerning Thee. When Thou wert little, before the Spirit came upon Thee, while Thou wert with Joseph in a vineyard, the Spirit came from the height and came to me in my house, like unto Thee, and I recognized it not and thought it was Thou. And the Spirit spoke to me and said, 'Where is Jesus my brother that I may meet Him?' And when he spoke thus to me, I was in doubt and thought it was a ghost tempting me. I took him then and bound him to the foot of the bed in my house, until I had gone out into the field and found you, Thee and Joseph, in the vineyard where Joseph was putting up vine props. It came to pass then that when Thou didst hear me speaking to Joseph Thou didst understand what I said and camest joyfully and saidst, 'Where is he that I may see him? rather did I expect him in this place.' It came to pass then that when Joseph heard Thee say this he was troubled, and we went back together and entered the house and found the Spirit bound on the bed. And we gazed on Thee and found that Thou wert like him; and when he who was bound on the bed was set free, he embraced Thee and kissed Thee and Thou didst kiss him and ye became one." This story, which reads like a piece of primitive folklore, enables us to understand how Gnostic explanations of the nature of the Redeemer found their way into the popular mind.

Sacramental mysteries played a large part in the Gnostic theory of redemption. As Scott-Moncrieff says: "*Pistis Sophia* teaches that Christ is not only the medium through which the mysteries of the *gnosis* may be learnt, but He is also the all-compassionate Saviour explaining how by the performance of certain sacraments forgiveness of sins may be obtained."¹¹¹ With these sacraments was associated a belief in the virtue of mystic words. Cabalistic lore was a prominent feature of Gnostic theosophy; the knowledge of it furnished those who were initiated into the mysteries with spells and invocations which overcame the power of the demons. In the last book of *Pistis Sophia* the institution of an esoteric sacrament is described. The Saviour who is with the disciples on the "Mount of Galilee" speaks as follows: "Verily I say unto you, not only will I cleanse your sins, but I will make you worthy of the kingdom of my Father; and I will give you the mystery of the forgiveness of sins upon earth, whereby those whom you shall forgive on earth shall be forgiven in heaven, and he whom you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. I will give to you the mystery of the kingdom of heaven that you yourselves may transmit it unto men. And Jesus said to them, Bring me fire and vine branches. They brought them to Him. He set out the offering, placing two vessels of wine, one on the right, the other on the left of the offering. He placed the offering in front and put a cup of water in front of the vessel of wine on the right and a cup of water in front of the vessel of wine on the left. Between the cups He set pieces of bread according to the number of the disciples, and He placed a cup of water behind the bread. Jesus stood before the offering and grouped His disciples behind Him, all clad in linen robes, and in their hands was the number of the names of the Father of the Treasure of Light. And He cried aloud, saying, Hear me, O Father of all Fatherhood,

Endless Light. *Iao, Iouo, Iao, Aoi, Oia, Psinother, Theropsin, Opsither, Nephthomaoth, Nephimaoth*. . . . Hear me, O Father of all Fatherhood. I invoke you also, ye forgivers of sins and cleansers of iniquities. Forgive the sins of the souls of these disciples and make them worthy to be reckoned in the kingdom of my Father, the Father of the Treasure of Light, for they have followed me and kept my commandments." After further invocations with other strings of mystic words, "Jesus said to His disciples, Rejoice and be glad, for your sins are forgiven, your sins have been blotted out, and ye have been reckoned in the kingdom of my Father. When He had said this, the disciples rejoiced with great joy." As Harnack has pointed out, we have in this mystery the doctrine of the magical efficacy of the sacraments which eventually established itself in the Catholic Church.¹¹²

It was part of the function of the Gnostic mystery-religion to secure a safe passage for the soul through the astral spheres to the upper world of light. The terrors of the path beyond the grave were a burden which rested on the human spirit like a paralysing nightmare. From this horror of the great darkness gnosis sought to give deliverance by means of magic formulæ, by revealing the name of the hostile guardians at the gates of the obstructing barriers or by furnishing the soul with some mystic word which won for it a free passage. The devices which rendered the hostility of the evil powers of none effect were various; sometimes instead of the demon's name it was the Name that was above every name, the Name of the Ineffable Mystery; sometimes, with more freedom from magic, it was the assurance that the soul had kept itself pure from the defilements of the world. A short passage from the Gnostic Gospel of Philip preserved by Epiphanius (*Hær.* 26. 13) affords an example of the latter. We read: "The Lord revealed to me what the soul in her ascent to heaven should say and how

she should answer every one of the higher powers. 'I have known myself and have gathered myself from all quarters and have not borne children to the Archon (the ruler of the world), but have pulled up his roots and have gathered the scattered members, and I know who thou art, for I belong to those who are from above.' And so the soul is released. But if it is found that she has borne a son, she is kept below until she is able to recover her children and attract them to herself." Here the passport to heaven is the assertion of abstinence from marriage—a prominent characteristic of Gnostic ethic, although by no means confined to Gnosticism.¹¹³

The Gospel-Apocalypse was not exclusively a Gnostic device to legitimatize esoteric doctrine ; it was employed, and perhaps extensively employed, by writers of the Great Church in the defence of catholic doctrine which was assailed by heretics, and in securing for ecclesiastical laws and institutions the authority of Christ. It should be realized that the idea of a secret revelation given by the Lord both before and after the resurrection was widely accepted in the early Church, and that Gnostics and catholic Christians differed, not in the apparatus which they employed to convey new truths under the authority of Christ, but in the character of the teaching which they attributed to Him. The most important example of an orthodox work setting forth a special revelation given to the apostles in the post-resurrection period, is the *Epistola Apostolorum*, a writing belonging to the second century recently edited by Dr. Carl Schmidt.¹¹⁴ The *Epistola* gives an account of the preaching of the apostles which, we are informed, they decided to draw up in order to counteract the false doctrines of Simon and Cerinthus. In the preface to the letter, which is addressed to the whole Church by the whole college of the apostles, we are told that it is to contain post-resurrection revelations of the Lord ; but before these are narrated the apostles set down a

confession of their faith in the pre-existence of Christ His activity as the creator of the world and as the Divine Word who spoke in the prophets. A short account is given of the Incarnation, of some miracles wrought by Christ (among them His wonderful knowledge at school, described at length in the Childhood Gospel of Thomas), of His crucifixion and resurrection, and of the infallible proofs given by Him to the disciples that He had risen in the flesh. Then follow the special revelations given by the Risen Lord in answer to the questions of the apostles. Of these two examples may be quoted, the first dealing with a matter of controversy with Gnostics which was evidently causing much concern in the Church, the question of the resurrection of the flesh. "We the Twelve said to Him, O Lord, in all things Thou hast been our salvation and life, and such a hope (of resurrection) Thou dost announce to us! And He said to us, Be strong and of good courage! Verily I say unto you, You will receive such a rest where there is neither eating nor drinking, neither rejoicing nor lamentation, neither earthly covering nor decay. And you will be companions, not of the earthly creation, but of that of the Father which is incorruptible. As I am always in the Father, so will you be in me. And we asked Him again, In what form? In that of the angels or perhaps in the flesh? And He answered us and said, I have put on your flesh in which I was born, crucified, buried, and raised from the dead through my heavenly Father, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet David concerning my death and resurrection. (Then follow the words of Ps. iii.). . . . When He had thus spoken to us, we said to Him, O Lord, in all things Thou hast been gracious to us, and hast redeemed us, and hast disclosed everything to us. One thing more we would with Thy permission ask of Thee. And He answered and said to us . . . Ask, for it is pleasant for me to speak with you. Verily I say unto you,

As my Father raised me from the dead, so will ye also rise in the flesh and be taken up to the highest heaven, to the place . . . which He who sent me has prepared for you" (ch. 19: Schmidt, *op. cit.* 64 ff.). This is an excellent example of the way in which Church writers used the secret revelation for apologetic purposes, with no thought apparently that they were doing anything but what was permissible and right. The second extract from the *Epistola*, which gives in the form of a special revelation an account of Christ's descent from the world of light, has a close resemblance to a passage already referred to in *Pistis Sophia*, and shows that a conception which has frequently been regarded as Gnostic was prevalent also among catholic Christians.¹¹⁵ "When I was about to come here from the Father of the universe and passed through the heavens, I put on the wisdom of the Father and clothed myself with the power of His might. I found myself in heaven, and I passed by the archangels and the angels in their form as though I had been one of them among the principalities and powers. I passed through them since I possessed the wisdom of Him who sent me. The archangels Michael and Gabriel and Uriel and Raphael followed me to the fifth firmament, for they thought in their heart that I was one of them. . . . I became all things in all, that I might glorify the dispensation of the Father and fulfil the glory of Him who sent me and return to Him. Ye know that the angel Gabriel brought the message to Mary. We answered, Yes, Lord. Then He answered and said to us, Do ye not remember that a little while ago I said, I became an angel among the angels, and I became all things in all? We said to Him, Yes, Lord. Then He answered and said to us, On that day when I put on the form of the angel Gabriel, I appeared to Mary and spoke with her. Her heart welcomed me and she believed. I took form and went into her body; I became flesh, for I was my own servant in relation to Mary, in the appearance

of an angel's form " (ch. 14 : Schmidt, 45 ff.). It is clear from this that the idea of the descent of Christ through the heavens was not exclusively Gnostic ; it is suggested in John iii. 13 ; Eph. iv. 9 ; and we find it, in a form very similar to that in the *Epistola*, in the Ascension of Isaiah (ch. 10), which in spite of its docetic traits and its later use by heretics was not of Gnostic origin.

It was not, however, only in the form of revelations from the post-resurrection period of Christ's life that the Gnostics issued their esoteric Gospels. The childhood of Jesus had an attraction for some of them. For those who believed that the heavenly Christ descended on Jesus at His baptism, the earlier portion of His life had, of course, no interest or significance. It was a purely human career, and as such they were not concerned with it. But those who held the view that the union of the Divine Saviour with Jesus dated from His birth, found in the period of the childhood a stage for the representation of their peculiar doctrines. The child Jesus was invested with divine attributes. He had the power of working miracles ; He was endowed with a wisdom which was not of this world. The idea of development was inconsistent with divinity ; accordingly from the earliest years the life of the Divine child exhibited the features which marked the activity of the Saviour in His manhood. Whether the extant Childhood Gospel of Thomas is or is not an orthodox adaptation of a Gnostic work, it is clear that stories such as are found in that Gospel were used by the Gnostics to advance their own tenets. Further consideration of this is deferred until the next chapter.

It was not perhaps until the second or third generation that Gnostics occupied themselves with the writing of esoteric Gospels. The founders of the schools were quite content to accept the Gospels in common use, for nothing was farther from their minds than to start a sectarian movement with evangelic

documents of their own. The aim of Valentinus (to speak of one about whom we are best informed) was to form an aristocratic school of thought within the Church, whose doctrines should reflect the deeper meanings of the Gospel hidden from the ordinary Christian ; but he was no schismatic, and when the breach eventually came through the action of the Church, his followers considered that they had been unfairly treated. " They complain regarding us (says Irenæus, *Hær.* iii. 15. 2), that when they hold opinions similar to ours we without cause keep ourselves aloof from their fellowship, and that when they say the same things and hold the same doctrine we call them heretics." It was in accordance with this desire to maintain their sense of unity with the Church that the Gnostics, at least to begin with, made use of the Church Gospels. " So firm (says Irenæus in another passage, *Hær.* iii. 11. 7) is the ground on which these Gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them, and with these as their starting-point each one of them endeavours to establish his own peculiar doctrine."

It was not, however, an altogether easy matter for the Gnostics to find themselves at home with the Gospels of the Church. They had the same difficulty with them as Christians in general had with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In these circumstances they had recourse to the allegorical method of interpretation, " the favourite method of men of vision," as Philo calls it.¹¹⁶ Allegory was an exegetical instrument consecrated by long use. It was held in almost universal repute as the only satisfactory way of dealing with venerable and authoritative writings which in their literal sense no longer commanded respect. The Stoics used the method in interpreting the Homeric writings ; the immoralities of the gods were by the free and ingenious use of allegory turned into edifying tales, and subtle spiritual meanings were found in the grossest legends. The greatest master of allegory was Philo, who made it his chief

instrument in the interpretation of the Old Testament. "The history of his people became in his hands mainly a didactic symbolic poem." Hebrew ritual was a type and shadow of greater realities. Truth was concealed from the vulgar mind and could be discovered only by those who had an understanding for the invisible things. In his symbolic interpretation of the Old Testament, Philo was followed by St. Paul and by later teachers of the Christian Church. There was a sound instinct in some minds which protested against the eccentricity and arbitrariness of the method; as Plato long before had declared that he would not admit into his Republic the Homeric tales "whether they were supposed to have an allegorical meaning or not,"¹¹⁷ so Porphyry objected to the practice of Christians who boasted that the plain words of Moses were enigmas and regarded them as oracles full of hidden mysteries.¹¹⁸ But in spite of all protests of this kind the allegoric method was firmly established in the Christian Church. As one is not surprised to find, this was true in particular of the Alexandrian school of exegesis, which was strongly influenced by Philo. In dealing with the Scriptures, alike of the Old Testament and of the New, Origen was frequently scornful of the acceptance of the literal meaning. Thus he says, for example, in *De Principiis*, iv. 16: "Who that has understanding will suppose that the first and second and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun and moon and stars? and that the first day was actually without a sky? And who is so foolish as to imagine that God in the manner of a husbandman planted a garden in Eden towards the east and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one eating of the fruit with the bodily teeth obtained life? and again that one was a partaker of good and evil by eating what was taken from a tree? And if God is said to walk in the garden in the evening and Adam is said to hide himself under a tree, I do not sup-

pose that any one doubts that these things symbolize certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance and not actually. . . . Nay, the Gospels themselves are filled with the same kind of narratives ; for example, the devil leading Jesus up into a high mountain in order to show Him from thence the kingdoms of the whole world and the glory of them. For who is there among those who read such accounts with discernment that would not condemn those who imagine that with the bodily eye . . . the kingdoms of the Persians and Scythians and Indians and Parthians could be seen ? ” It must be admitted that Origen used the allegorical method with sound judgment ; indeed he states that “ the passages which are true in their historical meaning are much more numerous than those which have a purely spiritual significance inwoven into them ” (*De Princ.* iv. 18). He however anticipated much modern criticism by interpreting the Fourth Gospel as a symbolical treatise. Of this instrument of allegoric interpretation which Origen employed with discrimination the Gnostics availed themselves with full licence in contempt of history. It enabled them to accept the Gospels as they stood and to read any meaning which suited them into the text. Thus in their hands the simplest and most tenderly human stories in the evangelic narrative became the symbols of cosmological mysteries, shadow-pictures of the forlorn and suffering Sophia and the like.

Valentinus and his school were thus ready to accept all that they found “ written in the Church of God.”¹¹⁹ But interpretation was needed ; the letter of Scripture served merely to conceal the deepest mysteries from the profane multitude. It was the business of the Gnostic who knew the world of reality to get behind the letter to the hidden meaning. The teaching of Jesus was the ultimate truth of things, but because of the dulness of men’s hearts He had been compelled to accommodate

His words to their feeble and earth-bound understanding. The apostles alone had entered into the mysteries of the Kingdom, and in the Gospels which they had written these had not been revealed. Only those who were led by the Spirit of Truth could penetrate behind appearance to reality. Not only Christ's words, but the incidents in His life recorded in the Gospels were symbols and representations of supramundane things. "The Saviour was born, baptized, tempted; He suffered and was crucified"—all that the Valentinians allowed—"but every one of these incidents had more in it than men with their earthly sense recognized; parallel with them heavenly events had happened and the true salvation had been accomplished."¹²⁰

Let us see how Gnostics applied this principle of interpretation to some of the Gospel narratives.¹²¹ Take, first, the story of the Star of Bethlehem. That the star appeared to guide the wise men from the east to the place where the Saviour was born, did not seem to the Valentinians to be a sufficient explanation. It was commonly believed that the star was of such surpassing glory that all other stars paled before it (so *Protevangelium*, ch. 21), and that spoke to those who had understanding of invisible things of the war in heaven in which the victory had been won by the Saviour Christ over the crushing tyranny of the starry spheres. As we have seen, no small part of man's burden was that he was subject to τὸ εἰμαρμένῃ, the remorseless fate which was imposed on him by planetary influence. From that fate he was delivered by the advent of Christ, whose star quenched all the hostile lights of heaven.

In a Sahidic fragment (Robinson, *Texts and Studies*, iv. 2. 164 f.) dealing with the birth of Christ we find that the star which rose in the east is identified with Christ Himself. "It was not a star (we read) like all the stars, but it was a great

star in the form of a wheel, its figure being like a cross, sending forth flashes of light ; letters being written on the cross, This is Jesus the Son of God." The view that this Christ-star through its appearance marked the beginning of the divine deliverance of men from evil powers was not merely a Gnostic fancy ; it was shared by those in the great Church, as we learn from a notable passage in Ignatius (*Ephes.* 19). "A star shone forth in the heaven above all the stars ; its light was unutterable and its strangeness caused amazement ; and all the rest of the constellations with the sun and moon formed themselves into a chorus about the star, but the star itself far outshone them all. . . . From that time forward every sorcery and every spell was dissolved, the ignorance of wickedness vanished away, the ancient kingdom was pulled down, when God appeared in the likeness of man unto newness of everlasting life, and that which had been perfected in the counsels of God began to take effect."¹²² It is almost certainly correct to say that "the ancient kingdom" whose destruction followed on the appearing of the star, is the dominion of fate. From every malignant demonic power Christ had come to set men free. I think we may say that there is truth as well as poetry in this allegorical interpretation of the star.

How did the Gnostics interpret the Baptism of Jesus ? That event, as we have seen in a former chapter, caused no little perplexity in the early Church, and various attempts, some of them far from successful, were made to read its significance. A common explanation shared by Gnostic and orthodox alike was that the Saviour was baptized, although He needed no baptism, in order that He might consecrate the water and make it efficacious for those who through baptism should be born again.¹²³ There were also Gnostics who regarded baptism as necessary to Jesus to purify Him for union with the heavenly Christ.¹²⁴ But in harmony with their general

view of things the Gnostics of the Valentinian school offered another explanation. The baptism of Jesus represented an act of redemption wrought in the unseen transcendental world. It was believed that the souls of men had to pass through a fiery stream before they could reach the heavenly rest. Sinners were consumed by it, while the righteous passed through unscathed. The stream of fire was one of the terrors on the other side of death which dismayed the human soul. Thus in a Bohairic fragment from "The Falling Asleep of Mary," in which the Virgin Mother entreats her Son for a safe passage in the world beyond, we read : "The river of fire which tosses its waves before Thee as the waves of the sea, wherein are proved the two portions, the righteous and the sinners—when I pass over it, let it not burn my soul." ¹²⁵ In the Excerpts from Theodotus (No. 38) we also find mention of this stream which flows from the throne of the Demiurge; on its bank Jesus sits to tame its fury and to secure a passage for the redeemed. Of this heavenly stream the Jordan was a figure. When Jesus entered the Jordan to be baptized, so an early tradition runs, a great light shone from the water (*Gospel of Ebionites*), or as it is variously put, a fire was kindled in the river (Justin, *Dial.* 88: pseudo-Cyprian, quoting *Prædicatio Pauli, de rebapt.* 17; *Sib. Oracles*, vi. 1 ff., vii. 82 ff.). The baptism of Jesus was accordingly conceived as a symbolic representation of the Saviour's baptism in the transcendental stream of fire, by which He overcame the madness of the evil powers and won deliverance for the souls of the elect. Thus we read (*Excerpt. de Theod.* 76): "and His baptism snatched us from the fire." ¹²⁶

We shall see later, when we consider the Acts of John, which shares in many details the Valentinian view of things, how the Gnostics of that school conceived the cross of Christ. The actual crucifixion had no redemptive significance; it was

merely a dramatic spectacle, pointing to something beyond itself, to which only the ignorant attached importance. Its true meaning lay in its being a symbol of a metaphysical act of redemption wrought by the æon Stauros, the heavenly Cross of Light.

The parables of Jesus offered free scope for the allegorical method of interpretation. That they were meant to conceal a deeper meaning from the *profanum vulgus* than appeared on the surface, Jesus Himself was regarded as suggesting when He said: "Unto you (the disciples) it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand" (Mark iv. 11 f.). Thus for the Gnostic all the parables of Jesus were allegories, whose significance was sought in supramundane facts. A single example will suffice to show the cosmological mysteries which were revealed by the employment of the allegorical method. The Parable of the Shepherd and the Lost Sheep, perhaps more than any other utterance of Christ's, has spoken directly to the human heart of the love of God for sinning men. The shepherd out in the wilderness anxiously searching, his coming back with the sheep on his shoulders, the gathering of friends to rejoice with him over its recovery—these pictures have in every age touched the imagination as the perfect expression of the Divine Saviourhood. What did the Gnostics make of this heart-shaking story? They saw in it the myth of Sophia who fell out of the Pleroma and wandered in disquietude in the nether darkness, until through the descent of the heavenly Christ she was rescued and led back to the world of light. Let us allow as much as we please for the mysticism which mingled with all the Gnostic speculations, yet we cannot but feel on reading the above interpretation how true the words of Gwatkin are that Gnosti-

cism "was much more at home in cosmogonies than in a world of sinners." ¹²⁷

The Valentinians made use of all four Gospels, but the one which suited their purpose best was the Fourth. That was natural, for it is itself saturated with the spirit of allegory.¹²⁸ Heracleon wrote a commentary on St. John's Gospel, and considerable portions of it have been preserved by Origen. The character of his interpretation may be gathered from the following examples. When it is said in John ii. 12 that Jesus after the marriage in Cana "went down to Capernaum," that according to Heracleon was to be understood of the descent of the Saviour into the material world: and similarly when two verses later in John it is stated that "Jesus went up to Jerusalem," that refers to the ascent of Christ out of the hylic world to the heavenly city. Here, as so frequently elsewhere, the simplest occurrences in the life of Jesus are projected into the supramundane sphere; they are symbols and suggestions of transcendental events. Heracleon's method may be seen in a somewhat more favourable light in his interpretation of Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria, which has been preserved practically complete. The woman is the type of "the spiritual Church," the community of the elect who by their possession of the heavenly seed implanted in them by Sophia (Wisdom) are destined for salvation. In the spiritual unrest which their entanglement in a gross and evil world creates within them their souls seek the water of life; they come to the well from which earthly creatures have drunk; but their seeking is in vain, until they drink of the water given by the heavenly Saviour which springs up in them to everlasting life. Their condition before they receive the true knowledge is one of swaying hither and thither; they worship they know not what, now the god of this world (typified by Mount Gerizim), now the god of the Jews, of whom Jerusalem

is the symbol ; and in this life of wandering in search of truth they are represented by the inconstant and sinning woman who has had five husbands.¹²⁹ But when knowledge is given to them, they worship the only true God, who is spirit. In the joy of their experience of salvation, they leave behind their desire for life now satisfied (the waterpot left at the well is the symbol of this desire) and go into the world to call to Christ those of the psychic souls which are capable of salvation—this ministry of the spiritual Church being typified by the woman who went into the city and said, “Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ ?” Here we see the allegorical method at its best, for the simple reason that there are many details in the story which were meant to be interpreted allegorically.¹³⁰

Symbolism in the interpretation of the Gospel narratives cannot be pronounced to be altogether illegitimate, but it is an instrument which must be used with caution and only when there are grounds for believing that a spiritual experience or conviction of faith has been objectified and embodied in a tale. An instance of this is the story of the Temptation, which, as Origen recognized long ago, is no record of events which actually happened as they are described, but a vivid representation, in the language of poetry, of a transaction which occurred in the soul of Jesus. That there are other narratives in the evangelic tradition which are most simply explained by regarding them as the realistic delineation of spiritual truths, may be admitted even by those who most firmly believe in the general historicity of the Gospels. But this discriminating acknowledgment of the presence of allegory in the Gospel records is very different from the attitude of the Gnostics in their employment of the instrument of symbolism. In their hands it was wholly subversive of the historical basis on which the Christian faith rests, and their systematic use of it, had their example been

universally followed, would have been fatal to the existence of Christianity. For the strength of our faith is like the fabled strength of Antæus; it must maintain contact with the solid ground of history from which it sprang. The conflict between the Church and Gnosticism was a vital one, for the latter in dissolving the Gospel history into shadow-pictures of invisible realities undermined the foundations on which the whole fabric of Christianity was raised. Read the Gospels in any other way than as the record of an actual life, lived in human conditions, in which the Eternal God revealed Himself for man's salvation; put in their place a system of abstractions, no matter how imposing, and the Christian faith in all that gives it a distinctive character as compared with other faiths will vanish from the world. For Christianity is Jesus Christ and the relationship with God into which men enter through Him who lived and died and is alive for evermore.

Unlike the Gnostics who approached Christianity with the prepossessions of Hellenistic thought, Marcion had no interest in cosmogonies, and the allegorical method of interpretation was abhorrent to him. He viewed Christianity at an entirely different angle from the Valentinians, whose one concern was to bring the Gospel into harmony with their Platonic metaphysic. Marcion's approach was definitely Christian. He alone of the men of his time seems to have had any real understanding of St. Paul. It was, in fact, his exaggerated Paulinism which drove him to the Gnostic position of making an absolute distinction between the God of the Old Testament, just and exacting in His demands, and the merciful God of the New whom Jesus revealed. Nature and Spirit, Law and Grace, were the great antitheses on which his theology was based. Of all the apostles St. Paul was the only one who had true insight into the meaning of the Christian faith. Jesus was misunderstood by the original apostles, and the Gospels written by them

gave a false view of His life and teaching, inasmuch as they were dominated by Jewish preconceptions. As was natural, the Gospel according to St. Matthew was the object of Marcion's severest censure; it was, for instance, inconceivable to him that Jesus could ever have said of the Jewish law: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Marcion conceived it to be his mission to set forth the Gospel in its original purity; as Tertullian indicates, evidently quoting his own words, he gave himself out as *emendator euangelii*.¹³¹ With this aim he chose St. Luke's Gospel and by a process of systematic mutilation produced "the Gospel" free from every taint of Judaism. Thus while Valentinus sought his doctrine in the Gospels in common use "by means of perverse interpretations and unscrupulous expositions,"¹³² Marcion fashioned a Gospel to suit his own opinions by arbitrary omissions from the text of St. Luke. Tertullian in a graphic passage (*de præscr. hæc.* 38) contrasts the methods of the two heresiarchs in dealing with the evangelic narrative. "The one (he says) perverts the Scriptures with his hand, the other their meaning by his interpretation. For though Valentinus seems to use the volume entire, he has laid violent hands on the truth with an even more cunning mind than Marcion. Marcion deliberately and openly made use of the knife and not the pen, since to provide himself with subject-matter he mutilated the Scriptures; Valentinus, however, spared them, since he had no thought of using the Scriptures for his subject-matter, but imposed his matter on the Scriptures. And yet he took away more and added more by rejecting the proper sense of the particular words, and by adding arrangements of things which do not exist."

The absolute distinction which Marcion drew between the God of the Jews and the Father-God revealed by Jesus, was associated with the Gnostic conception of matter as utterly

evil. As Jesus could not be regarded as the Divine Messiah foretold by Hebrew prophets, so it was impossible that He, the revealer of the Good God, could be thought of as having entered into any real relation with the material world. In his view of the person of Jesus, Marcion was the most thoroughgoing of all Docetes. The character of his Gospel was determined by his two presuppositions that for Christians the Old Testament was no divine revelation, and that the earthly ministry of Jesus was in appearance only, a theophany which lasted for the space of a year or two. Thus the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel were completely omitted; apart from the fact that a birth from a virgin was against nature, the idea that Jesus was born of a woman was altogether unseemly and unworthy of His divine dignity. The genealogy in Luke iii. was dropped; Jesus was an entirely new appearance in the world, without lineage, without family or home. There was no childhood to record, for a divine being was incapable of growth; Jesus when He appeared from heaven was at the height of His powers once for all—*semel grandis, semel totus*.¹³³ The baptism and the temptation were eliminated, the former on the double ground that the Saviour needed no baptism and that it was inadmissible to have Him associated with a Jewish prophet, the latter on the ground that a divine being cannot be tempted. Thus we find that Marcion's Gospel began in the following manner: "In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, in the days of Pilate (Luke iii. 1a), Jesus came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught in the synagogue (Luke iv. 31). And He came to Nazareth and entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke iv. 16). It was clearly Marcion's view that the entrance of Jesus into the world was to be understood as the descent of a spiritual being from heaven in the likeness of a man, but in a likeness with no reality behind it. The humanity of Jesus was an appearance only. His ministry

was a ministry of teaching, and everything in St. Luke's Gospel was omitted which represented Jesus as acknowledging the Old Testament to be a revelation pointing forward to Himself. Thus the passage in which it is narrated that Jesus read from the book of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue of Capernaum and announced the fulfilment of the prophecy in Himself, was passed over (Luke iv. 17 ff.). In the same way, passages like Luke xviii. 31 and Luke xxiv. 25 were omitted. All historical reality was taken from Christianity through breaking the continuity of its message with the Old Testament revelation and through the denial of the true humanity of Jesus. Quite as thoroughly as by the method of symbolism, Marcion succeeded in emptying Christianity of its significance as a divine revelation given in the fact of a real human personality. We are not surprised at the vehemence of Tertullian when he exclaimed : " Spare the one hope of the whole world, thou who wouldst do away with the dishonour of our faith. Whatsoever is unworthy of God is gain to me." ¹³⁴

CHAPTER V.

CHILDHOOD GOSPELS.

THE primitive evangelic tradition, as we find it most nearly represented in St. Mark's Gospel, had nothing to say of the events of Christ's infancy and childhood. The interest of the first Christian communities was elsewhere. So far as the historical facts of the life of Jesus claimed their attention, it was the interest of faith in His Messiahship that led to the choice of incidents which formed the main deposit in the evangelic narrative. Controversy with Jews gathered round the question of the Messianic dignity of Jesus, for the first difficulty with which apostolic preaching had to reckon was the obstinate and deep-seated Jewish prejudice against accepting as the eagerly awaited Deliverer one who had been subjected to the ignominy of the cross. It was the acuteness of this controversy, no less than the supreme worth that the events had for Christian faith, which explains why so large a part of the Gospel narrative is concerned with the passion and cross and resurrection of Jesus. But in the course of time other considerations led the early believers to turn their thoughts to the beginnings of the life of Jesus. The Divine Messiah had not been raised to that dignity by the method of adoption, by the entrance of a heavenly being into Him at baptism; what He was, He was originally in virtue of the Divine nature which was His when He entered the world. It was this important and indeed vital theological interest which led to the incorporation of the

story of the supernatural birth into the Gospel record. He who came to save His people from their sins did not enter the world as other men ; He had been conceived in the womb of a virgin by the creative power of God.¹³⁵ This part of the Christian message was the subject of fresh controversy with the Jews, and when the controversy became serious and calumnies were being diligently spread abroad,¹³⁶ it was felt that the account of Jesus' birth given in the First and Third Gospels was inadequate to support the convictions of Christian faith. Early in the second century stories were in circulation, some of them probably reduced to writing, which were designed to meet hostile criticisms and misrepresentations, and thus to set on what appeared to be a more secure foundation the faith of the Church in our Lord's Divine origin. These stories, reproducing several strains of tradition, were incorporated in the first Gospel with which this chapter deals, the PROTEVANGELIUM OF JAMES.

The Protevangelium in its present form is a composite work, dating perhaps as late as the fifth century. The portion, however, with which we are concerned, relating the nativity and upbringing of Mary and the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, had its origin in the second century, and to this part alone, much the larger part, is appropriate the title given by Origen to a writing to which he refers, the *Book of James*. The work as a whole was brought to the West about the middle of the sixteenth century by a French humanist named Postel, who on his travels had found it in use as a Church lectionary among Oriental Christians. Postel was a man of somewhat eccentric views ; he believed, for example, that a second redemption of mankind would come through a woman ; accordingly, the prominence given to the Virgin Mary in the book which he had discovered, together with the fact that he had found it used in church, led him to attach supreme importance to it

and to regard it as a genuinely historical introduction to the canonical Gospels—"euangelii ad hunc diem desideratam basin et fundamentum." Whether or not the name now given to it, the *Protevangelium* or *Earliest Gospel*, was due to him cannot be determined. Postel translated it into Latin from the original Greek, and it was published along with St. Mark, the two forming, as was claimed, a complete and authentic Gospel narrative. In spite of the fact that the first editor, Bibliander, had no hesitation in placing the *Protevangelium* among Church writings, ranking it with deuterocanonical books like *Ecclesiasticus* and the *Books of the Maccabees*, it was looked upon with great suspicion by Roman Catholics, and was attributed by Henry Stephen to Postel himself.

The "history" of James—so the author himself describes the book (ch. 25)—shows signs of its composite origin. We are able to detach from it, as not forming part of the original work, a short narrative which deals with the infant John the Baptist and his father, Zacharias, at the time of the Massacre of the Innocents. This section, which probably displaced an earlier account of the massacre, embodies a tradition about the death of Zacharias which, so far as we can judge, was not in existence until long after the second century. In any case Origen, who was acquainted with "the book of James," relates a story about the death of Zacharias which is quite different from that given in the *Protevangelium*. But apart from this, in the main part of the book which is occupied with the story of Mary's life, the birth of Jesus, and the visit of the Magi, we find indications of written sources which are tolerably plain. In one instance the evidence is convincing. Embedded in the narrative which tells of the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, there is a section whose character can be satisfactorily explained only on the supposition that it is an extract taken from an earlier writing, for in it Joseph is suddenly introduced as describing

in the first person the strange accompaniments of the marvellous birth. Similar indications, although not quite so marked, of the author's dependence on predecessors, are to be found in other parts of the narrative. We can see that various accounts of Mary's childhood have been harmonized, and in places the work has been so awkwardly done that we must probably conclude that the author was hampered in the use of his material by the influence of different narratives which he sought to weave into one.¹³⁷ In any case different traditions were at his command, the significance of which is that the beginning of the life of Jesus had for some time held a place of some importance in the interest of the Church. We have thus sufficient evidence to show that the Book of James was not the first to expand the Infancy stories of the First and Third Gospels, that in it we have not the free inventions of a single author, but stories, apart from the canonical details, drawn from a treasury of legends which had been in existence, we may say with probability, at least since the beginning of the second century.¹³⁸ What the author did was to weave his material into an artistic whole, and apart from a few details he succeeded admirably in his task.

The story opens with a vivid picture of the sorrow of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, because of their childlessness. On that account Joachim was put to open shame in the temple when on "the great day of the Lord" he was bringing his gifts to the altar, and to spare his wife the knowledge of his rebuff he did not return home but went into the wilderness to fast and pray. Meanwhile Anna at home bewailed the absence of her husband and her childless condition, and had her suffering increased by the taunts of her maidservant whose well-meant efforts to comfort her she had petulantly rejected. She went out into the garden to pray—there is a pathetic touch in her taking off her garments of mourning and putting on her

wedding garment —and as she lifted up her eyes to heaven she saw a nest of sparrows in a laurel tree. The sight of the nest caused her to break into a lament, which is all the more poignant because of its monotony.

“ Woe is me ! who begat me ? and what womb gave me birth ?
 For I was born accursed before the sons of Israel ;
 I was reproached, and they drove me with jeers from the temple
 of the Lord.

Woe is me ! what am I like ?
 I am not like the birds of heaven,
 For even the birds of heaven are fruitful before Thee, O Lord.

Woe is me ! what am I like ?
 I am not like the beasts of the earth,
 For even the beasts of the earth are fruitful before Thee, O
 Lord.

Woe is me ! what am I like ?
 I am not like these waters,
 For even these waters are fruitful before Thee, O Lord.

Woe is me ! what am I like ?
 I am not like this earth,
 For even this earth bears its fruits in due season and blesses Thee,
 O Lord ” (ch. 3).

Anna's prayers were heard : the angel of the Lord brought her a message that she would bear a child. Meantime Joachim had been told from heaven of the answering of Anna's prayer, and messengers came to her to announce her husband's homecoming. Then follows one of the most charming pictures in the book. “ And behold, Joachim came with his flocks, and Anna stood at the door. And she saw Joachim coming, and she ran and hung on his neck and said, Now I know that the Lord hath blessed me exceedingly, for behold, the widow is no longer a widow and I that am childless shall conceive ” (ch. 4).

When the child was born and Anna was told that it was a girl, she rejoiced and said, “ This day my soul has been magni-

fied.”¹³⁹ The child was called Mary, and when at the age of six months she unexpectedly walked a few steps, Anna made her a sanctuary where her feet would not touch the impure earth, and put her in the care of “undefiled daughters of the Hebrews.” In accordance with a vow which her parents had made, Mary when she was three years old was taken to live in the temple and was welcomed by the priest in words which betoken the high place assigned to her by the early Church in the work of salvation: “The Lord hath magnified thy name in all generations; on thee (as a foundation) at the end of the days the Lord will manifest His redemption to the sons of Israel.” Mary was then set “on the third step of the altar, and the Lord bestowed grace upon her, and she danced on her feet, and the whole house of Israel loved her” (ch. 7). Joachim and Anna now disappear from the story.¹⁴⁰

When Mary had reached the age of twelve and it was not fitting that she should remain longer in the temple, a council of the priests was held and it was determined under Divine guidance that she should be committed to the care of one of the widowers of the people, who in the eyes of the law should be her husband. Heralds went forth summoning the widowers to the temple, and Joseph, who appears in the narrative as one familiar to its readers, in his eagerness to respond “threw down his axe and went out to meet them.” Each widower, as he had been instructed, bore a rod, and the sign of a dove coming forth from Joseph’s rod marked him as the man who should receive into his care “the virgin of the Lord.” Joseph at first refused the charge; he was old¹⁴¹ and had sons and she was but a girl; but solemnly enjoined by the priest who reminded him of the fate of Dathan, Abiram, and Korah, he took her home and immediately went off to his work of building at a distance. In Joseph’s absence Mary, with other virgins who like her belonged to the house of David,¹⁴² was employed in spinning wool for

the curtain of the temple, and to her was given the honour of spinning the royal purple and scarlet. One day at the well a heavenly voice pronounced her "blessed among women," and when in alarm she returned to the house and took up the purple wool to spin, an angel appeared, saying, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour in the sight of the Lord and thou shalt conceive from His word" (ch. 11). From the Annunciation onwards, the narrative dealing with Mary's visit to Elisabeth follows St. Luke's account somewhat closely.

When Joseph returned home from his housebuilding six months later and learned of Mary's condition, he was deeply distressed and smitten in conscience that he had been so neglectful of the charge given to him.¹⁴³ "With what countenance shall I look towards the Lord my God? What shall I pray for concerning this maiden? For I received her as a virgin in the temple of the Lord my God, and I have not guarded her." Joseph had naturally concluded that Mary had been guilty of sin, and from thinking of his own neglect he turned to her with passionate reproaches. "Thou who wast so cherished by God, why hast thou done this? hast thou forgotten the Lord thy God? why hast thou humbled thy soul, thou who wast brought up in the Holy of Holies and didst receive food from the hand of an angel?" (ch. 13). Mary protested her innocence with tears. Pondering over his duty in a situation so bewildering, Joseph determined to divorce her secretly, but an angel appeared to him in a dream of the night and revealed to him the secret of Mary's state. "Fear not for this child, for that which is in her is of the Holy Ghost. She will bear a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (ch. 14).

A visit from Annas the scribe to inquire why Joseph had not been present at the synagogue service led to Mary's condition being made known to the religious authorities. They

took action at once and had Joseph and Mary brought before them and charged them both with sin. When they declared their innocence, first one and then the other was subjected to the ordeal of drinking the bitter water (Num. v. 17), and to the astonishment of all the people both were proved guiltless. Then "Joseph took Mary and went to his house, rejoicing and glorifying the God of Israel" (ch. 16).

The narrative next describes the journey to Bethlehem for the enrolment. The author's gift of realistic portraiture shows us the little party on the road—one of Joseph's sons leading the ass on which Mary sat and Joseph walking behind. The journey apparently was from Jerusalem—there is no suggestion in the story from beginning to end that Joseph and Mary had any connexion with Nazareth—and three miles from Bethlehem Mary's hour arrived. "Joseph turned and saw her sad, and he said within himself, Perhaps her burden troubleth her. And again Joseph turned and saw her laughing, and he said to her, Mary, what has come over thee, for I see thy face at one time laughing and at another time sad? And Mary said to Joseph, It is because I see with my eyes two peoples, one weeping and lamenting and one rejoicing and exulting" (ch. 17).¹⁴⁴ A cave was found in the desert region to which Mary was taken to abide her time.

At this point in the narrative (ch. 18. 2) Joseph is abruptly introduced as describing some marvellous events in the first person. The passage is very striking. Life and movement are everywhere suspended; the world lies still and motionless as under a magic spell. The conception is a common one in the folklore of many peoples; the most familiar example is found in the fairy tale of the Sleeping Beauty. When the hour of Jesus' birth was drawing on, with true poetic feeling the writer borrowed this old motive and pictured a sudden hush and arrestment of all activity, as if the world of nature and of

men were in expectation of some great event. "Now I, Joseph, was walking and I was not walking; and I looked at the air and saw the air struck with astonishment; and I looked at the pole of heaven and saw it fixed, and the birds of the air were motionless. I looked at the earth and I saw a vessel lying and workmen stretched beside it, and their hands were in the dish (as if they were about to eat) . . . and they who were about to bring it to their mouth did not bring it, but the faces of all were turned upwards. And behold, sheep were being driven and went not forward, and the shepherd lifted up his hand to strike with his staff and his hand remained in the air; and I looked at the stream of the river and saw that the mouths of the kids were down, but they were not drinking. Then of a sudden everything resumed its ordinary course" (ch. 18).¹⁴⁵

The birth of Jesus followed this strange suspension of life. It is described as a sunrise. "They stood in the place where the cave was and behold, a bright cloud overshadowed the cave. . . . And suddenly the cloud vanished from the cave and a great light appeared in the cave, so that our eyes could not bear it. And after a little that light faded until the babe was seen, and it came and took the breast from its mother Mary" (ch. 19). Salome, who suddenly appears on the scene, was incredulous when she was told that a virgin had given birth. On essaying to put the matter to the proof she was punished for her impiety, but was miraculously healed when she took the infant Jesus in her arms.¹⁴⁶

Farther than this we need not go in sketching the contents of the book. The visit of the Magi, which is related after the Salome incident, is described very much as it is in St. Matthew,¹⁴⁷ and as we have seen, the story of the child John the Baptist and of the death of his father Zacharias is to be regarded as a later insertion. At the close of the book the author himself

speaks under the pseudonym of James. "Now I, James, who wrote this history in Jerusalem, at the time of the disturbance when Herod died, withdrew and lived in the desert until the disturbance in Jerusalem had ceased, glorifying the Lord God who had given me the gift and the wisdom to write this history" (ch. 25). We may assume that the "James" under whose name the author wrote was James, the Lord's brother. The mention of Herod's death was intended to convey the impression that the writing of the book was practically contemporaneous with the events described, and consequently that "the history" was to be trusted as accurate. Besides this fact which showed that the story was no mere tradition, there was the guarantee of its authorship by an unimpeachable witness, for who better than James, who was a son of Joseph by his earlier marriage, could speak with authority of the matters attending the birth of Jesus which were the subject of so grave controversy?

Of the real author and the *provenance* of the book we can say almost nothing. It is clear that it was not written in Palestine, for the author has very hazy ideas about the topography of the country; he speaks, for instance, of Joseph's getting ready to go from Bethlehem to Judæa (ch. 21). Besides, the distinct statement that the book was written by James "in Jerusalem" may, when we consider its character, be taken as an indication that it was written somewhere else. Nor can the author have been a Jewish Christian of the Diaspora; his ignorance of Jewish religious customs puts that out of the question. No one brought up in the Jewish tradition, with an intimate knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, could have represented Joachim as being repelled because he was childless, when he came to the temple to offer his gifts, and still less, even eighty years after the destruction of the temple, could any Christian of Jewish descent, however bent he was on glorifying

Mary, have pictured the priest as setting her on the third step of the altar, or have conceived her as being brought up within the temple as a sort of Vestal virgin. It may, accordingly, be regarded as certain that the book had its origin in heathen-Christian circles, a fact which is also borne out by the high esteem in which virginity is held. But after all, authorship and *provenance* in the case of a book like the Protevangelium are comparatively small matters; what is more to the point is to recognize its value as a piece of early Christian literature and to understand the religious conditions amid which it was produced and the end which it was designed to serve. Whoever he was, the author was a literary artist of no mean powers. His characters are drawn with insight and sympathy, and numerous little touches show how closely he had observed nature and human life. He has given us in his book pictures which for their simple beauty linger in the mind—Anna praying under the laurel tree till the sight of the sparrows' nest turns her prayer into a lament, her watching at the door for the coming of Joachim, and the tender greeting which she gave him in the fulness of her new-born joy; these are but two examples of the author's imaginative gift and artistic skill. Apart from the serious aim which dominated him throughout, we see the writer's delight in his art. As a romance pure and simple the book possesses a singular charm for the reader, for whom the ancient controversies which echo through it have no longer any interest.

The Protevangelium is, however, something very much more than a religious romance meant to please and edify. It fills up empty spaces in sacred history, but the writer was not greatly moved by any desire to satisfy the curiosity of the pious about unrecorded events. With the growing interest in Mary which every controversy about Christ's nature increased, we may assume that there did exist a natural curiosity to know

more about her. But it was not in response to that feeling that the Book of James was written. If that motive came into play at all, it was entirely subsidiary. The author was not interested in history or in old traditions for themselves; he was interested in them only in so far as they served the theological purpose which he had in view. For throughout, his attractive story was the very last thing that it seems to a modern reader to be; it was a work of popular apologetic, designed to establish faith which had been shaken by controversy. It was Christian doctrine, the doctrine of our Lord's person, that above everything was the writer's concern. To defend the catholic view against subversive influences, he wrote his "history" of the Birth, Training, and Motherhood of Mary the mother of Christ.

That his defence of Christ's divine dignity took the shape that it did was largely determined by the character of the attack made upon it. It was a reply to slanders uttered against Mary for the purpose of discrediting Jesus. What these slanders were we may best learn from the passages quoted by Origen from the "True Word" of Celsus (*c. Celsum*, i. 28. 32). Celsus' book was written about the year 178, but the calumnious stories exploited in it were no doubt the stock in trade of every Jewish opponent of Christianity for several generations before.¹⁴⁸ Celsus sneered at the idea of finding a Divine Saviour in one so humbly born as Jesus: He was the child of a poor village girl who earned her livelihood by spinning; that, as Origen rightly answered, was by no means to His discredit; but when Celsus further alleged that Mary had been driven from her home for shameful conduct and had given birth to Jesus in dishonour, the slander touched the feelings of Christian people to the quick. It was to meet all such aspersions on the character of Mary and on the origin of Jesus that the Book of James was written. It was "the natural fruit of the indigna-

tion " aroused in Christian circles by the malignant calumnies of the Jews.¹⁴⁹

The author went skilfully to work. His polemical aim is never obtruded, and yet at every step he had clearly in view the things which had been said to Mary's discredit. Unlike Origen, he seems to have shared the feeling common in antiquity,¹⁵⁰ that it was derogatory to the dignity of Jesus that His mother should have been of humble birth ; accordingly we read that Joachim, the father of Mary, was very rich, the possessor of large flocks and herds. Further, it is stated that Mary was of royal descent ; she belonged to the house and lineage of David. Her dignity as one so nobly born was enhanced by the circumstances attending her birth. She was a " wonder-child," granted to her parents who had long been childless.¹⁵¹ An angel of the Lord announced her coming, and declared that she " would be spoken of in all the world." The divine favour so signally shown in her birth manifestly destined her for some great mission ; she was accordingly devoted by her parents to the service of God and guarded with the most scrupulous care in her earliest years from the slightest contact with an evil world. She was brought up " like a dove " in the temple, and there fed by the hands of an angel.¹⁵² When her residence in the temple was considered no longer seemly, she was entrusted to the care of an aged widower, that she might continue to live her life of spotless purity. The Jewish sneer at the maiden who made a livelihood by spinning was answered by the story of the making of the temple curtain, for which Mary from among the " undefiled virgins of the house of David " was chosen to spin the true purple and scarlet. Every detail in the narrative was designed to exclude the possibility that anything but the miraculous working of God led to her giving birth to Jesus. She lived in the house of Joseph,¹⁵³ but he was a man advanced in years and besides, at the time when she

conceived, he was engaged at a distance on his work as a carpenter. The angelic message at the annunciation was that she would conceive "from the word of the Lord." Joseph's distress on learning that she was with child was relieved, as in St. Matthew's Gospel, by the appearance of an angel in a dream. But the author was not content with this proof of Mary's innocence. It was not enough that Joseph should be convinced that Mary's honour was unstained; it was necessary to show that the Jewish authorities who were concerned in the maintenance of her virginity were also convinced that she had preserved her purity. Accordingly the story of the ordeal of the bitter water was introduced, which made it plain that the priest was grudgingly compelled to acknowledge that Joseph and Mary were both free from fault. "Since the Lord God has not made your sins manifest, neither do I judge you." The author's sense of the completeness of the vindication of Mary is reflected in his words: "and Joseph took Mary and went to his house rejoicing and glorifying the God of Israel."

If the writer of the Protevangelium was dependent on written sources, it is probable that at this point (the end of ch. 16), where the ordeal by water had established the virginal conception, one source came to a close. In any case the first sixteen chapters of the book are in themselves a complete whole; they furnished Christian readers with a convincing answer to the slanders of Jewish and Gentile unbelievers. But the author had another interest—the glorification of Mary in her manner of giving birth to Jesus, which in his view was calculated to establish still more securely the divine dignity of our Lord. The virginal birth quite as much as the virginal conception was the object of his concern. Already in the narrative describing the annunciation the author had anticipated this part of his task, for in answer to the angel, Mary had put the question, "Shall I bear as every woman beareth?"

and had been told that she would not. Accordingly in the section of the book dealing with the birth of Jesus every detail goes to make clear that the birth was an astonishing and supernatural event, without any accompaniment of the pangs of travail,¹⁵⁴ and that in it the virginity of Mary remained inviolate. Whether or not the conception of Mary's virginity *in partu* was created by the author of the Protevangelium, it was firmly lodged by his influence in the mind of the Church, and this together with the idea, to which the Protevangelium is the earliest witness, that "the brethren" of Jesus were the sons of Joseph by his former marriage prepared the way for the acceptance of the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity. The Church did not accept this dogma without protest on the part of many. Tertullian was the protagonist of the opposing view. In his polemic against the Gnostics he maintained, with much energy and some indelicacy of language, that Mary gave birth to Jesus in the ordinary manner of women,¹⁵⁵ and, interpreting the words in the Gospels about Christ's brethren in their natural sense, declared that they were Mary's children born of her marriage with Joseph after the birth of Jesus.¹⁵⁶ But in spite of opposition the belief in Mary's perpetual virginity gained ground. Clement of Alexandria¹⁵⁷ and Origen¹⁵⁸ followed the author of the Protevangelium in his view of Mary's virginity and of the brethren of Jesus; and although in the West the Church's interpretation of "the brethren" was altered under Jerome's influence, so that they were regarded as "cousins," both in the East and West the doctrine of Mary's inviolate virginity throughout her whole life came to be universally accepted. At the close of the fourth century those who did not accept the *ἀειπαρθενία* of Mary were looked upon as heretics, and against them Jerome brought to bear all the resources of his learning in the treatise *De perpetua virginitate* which fixed opinion in the Church. Thenceforward the formula of ortho-

doxy was : *virgo concepit, virgo peperit, virgo permansit* (*Pseudo-Matthew*, 13. 3). That this doctrine was regarded as important in the interests of Christology is apparent from the words of Proclus at the time of the Nestorian controversy : “ If the mother did not remain a virgin, then he that was born was a mere man, and the birth was not miraculous ; but if even after the birth she remained a virgin, how will not he that was born be also God and the mystery such as no one can utter ? ” The value which the doctrine of the *ἀειπαρθενία* had in maintaining Christ’s divinity was due to the prevalence of the belief from the second century onwards that a life of virginity was the true Christian ideal. Not even in His being born could Jesus be the passive instrument in marring that perfect purity which was the glory of His saints.

After our survey of the character of the book it scarcely needs to be said that the Protevangelium is not history. Such facts as there were at his disposal in the canonical writings the author used—some incidents like the announcement to the shepherds on the fields at Bethlehem and the flight to Egypt were omitted altogether—but even when he borrowed from the Gospels he made changes whenever it suited his purpose. These changes were not merely of the character of literary embellishments ; they had for the most part some relation to the serious aim of the book. Take, for instance, the introduction of “ the cave ” as the place where Jesus was born. That feature of the story was probably already present in the cycle of traditions about Christ’s infancy from which the writer drew his material ; Justin Martyr knew of it,¹⁵⁹ and it is unlikely that he borrowed it from the Protevangelium. How the cave came to be associated with the birth of Jesus we do not know. It may have been due to the influence of legends current in the heathen world ; stories of the birth of gods in caves were not uncommon.¹⁶⁰ But whatever was the origin of the tradition, the

cave was much more suitable for our author's purpose than a stable in Bethlehem. When we bear in mind that one aim of the book was to remove from the account of the antecedents of the life of Jesus anything that suggested the obscurity and poverty of a humble lot, we understand that the manger in St. Luke's narrative was an inconvenient detail. The writer did not pass it over altogether; he introduced it in another part of his story; but instead of being the cradle of the new-born Saviour, it was represented as the place of His concealment during the massacre of the Innocents. The cave which displaced the stable and the manger commended itself to the author of the *Protevangelium* probably for two reasons. It was, firstly, a secret place far from the abodes of men—the cave was not in Bethlehem, but three miles from it in a desert region; where more fitly could the great mystery of the birth of Jesus have been transacted? And secondly, the cave was a fit symbol of the dark world into which Jesus was born; there in the darkness shone the dazzling light which signalized the advent of the Saviour.¹⁶¹ Whether this be the true explanation of the change which the author made in St. Luke's narrative, the fact remains that he did not scruple to alter the earlier accounts which lay before him. He dealt freely with his sources, because only so could he make his story the appropriate vehicle of the truths which he was concerned to maintain. To him the guarantee of truth in history was what was fitting. The stories which had grown up around the early life of Mary had their origin in preconceptions of what was right and proper in one who was to be the mother of Jesus. As nothing was actually known of her birth and childhood, devout imagination, guided by the feeling of that which was appropriate, invented tales which were accepted because it was fitting that things should have happened so. The controlling idea was Christ's divine dignity. Everything narrated of Mary had to be brought into harmony

with that. Thus it was fitting that miracle should surround her birth, and that she should grow up in the temple in immaculate purity, fed with heavenly food ; it was fitting that for Christ such a chosen vessel should have been prepared—one born of royal lineage, the special gift of God, consecrated from the womb and guarded from all evil. It was not history, but it was accepted as history, because it was thought that such things were demanded by the dignity of Christ. Here, as so frequently elsewhere, the use of “ the illative sense ” obliterated the distinction between historical fact and what was supposed to be appropriate.

The Protevangelium had an astonishing influence in the future history of the Church, an influence which over a large part of Christendom came to exceed even that of the Gospels themselves. In the West the book, to begin with, was regarded with suspicion, and mainly through the influence of Jerome who denounced its extravagance it was officially condemned.¹⁶² But the stories had become firmly rooted in the popular imagination, and by various devices the contents of the writing which had been repudiated by ecclesiastical authority were brought back into general circulation. Harnack has truly observed that “ the history of apocryphal literature is a proof that the prohibition of books is powerless against a pressing need.”¹⁶³ There was a demand for stories of Christ’s human antecedents, and the demand was met. By an audacious counterstroke those who favoured the Protevangelium invoked the authority of the man who had secured its condemnation to win for its stories a general acceptance in the Church. In the fifth century, under the cover of two forged letters, the one conveying a request to Jerome from two bishops to translate the original Hebrew Matthew into Latin and the other intimating Jerome’s undertaking of the task, there appeared a writing, now known as the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, which was simply a recension of the

Protevangelium with additions from the Childhood Gospel of Thomas. Somewhat later, in the sixth century, another recension, free from the somewhat coarse and extravagant details of Pseudo-Matthew, was issued under the name *The History of the Nativity of Mary*, and this, too, in course of time was furnished with credentials bearing Jerome's name. Thenceforward the influence of the apocryphal stories of Mary's life and of the Nativity of Jesus rapidly increased in the Latin Church. Painters and poets drew their inspiration from them, and although for several centuries the accredited teachers of the Church looked askance at the legends, they were securely established in popular esteem, and eventually through their incorporation in the *Speculum Majus* of Vincent de Beauvais and in the *Speculum Sanctorum* (*Legenda Aurea*) of Jacobus de Voragine they were generally accepted and exerted an influence far greater than the Biblical narrative. In the East the Protevangelium received from the first a cordial welcome. It was so highly prized that its stories found a place in the liturgy of the Greek Church and furnished material for the homilies of preachers. Translations circulated in Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, and Arabic, and the legends often fantastically embellished and exaggerated found a place in a comprehensive history of the Infancy and Childhood, the so-called "Arabic Gospel," which had a remarkable vogue, not only in the Churches of the East, but also in Mohammedan circles.

But it was not only as a pleasant and edifying tale which appealed to the popular mind that the Protevangelium left its mark on Christian history. In it we have the first literary expression of the glorification of Mary which seriously influenced catholic theology and eventually led, in association with influences which flowed in from other quarters, to the exaltation and adoration of the Virgin. This is not the place to discuss the extremely complex movement which gave rise to the cult

of Mary, but two ideas may be briefly alluded to which were suggested by the Book of James. The first is the doctrine of Mary's sinlessness. That is not explicitly asserted in the Protevangelium, but the doctrine is there in germ, in the picture of Mary brought up like a dove in the temple and fed on angels' food. There can be little doubt that already in the second century there was a disposition to believe that the *damnosa hæreditas* of a sinful nature had been annulled in Mary. There is, indeed, no suggestion of this in Justin and Irenæus ; these writers speak only of Mary's faith and obedience in contrast with the unbelief and disobedience of Eve. But the representation of the Protevangelium is sufficient to show how the current of thought was flowing in popular circles. In the fourth century we find the sinlessness of Mary distinctly stated by Ephraim of Syria (c. 370) : "Thou, O Lord, and Thy mother are the only ones who in all respects are perfectly holy ; for in Thee, O Lord, is no blemish and on Thy mother no spot." ¹⁶⁴ By the authority of Augustine the doctrine was definitely fixed in the West ; in his book "On Nature and Grace," written to controvert the teaching of Pelagius, Mary is declared to be an exception to the law of human depravity. "I make an exception in the case of the holy Virgin Mary, who for the honour of God cannot be brought into the question when sin is discussed. For we know that more grace was vouchsafed to her to enable her to overcome sin in every respect, since she had been counted worthy to conceive and to give birth to Him, of whom it is known that He had no sin." ¹⁶⁵ This doctrine of Mary's sinlessness was never afterwards in dispute ; what alone was discussed, and indeed became the subject of a long and embittered controversy in the Middle Ages between Franciscans and Dominicans, was the time when the grace of perfect holiness had been imparted, whether before birth or after it. The controversy was settled in 1854 by the

promulgation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which none might venture to deny if he were to avoid the shipwreck of his faith. "The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first moment of her conception, by means of the special favour and pre-eminence on the part of Almighty God . . . was preserved free from every stain of original sin." The other doctrine adumbrated in the Protevangelium is that which attributes to Mary a share in the work of salvation. "On thee as a foundation (*ἐπὶ σοί*)," said the priest in welcoming the child Mary to the temple, "in the end of the days the Lord will manifest His redemption to the sons of Israel" (ch. 6). In these words we see the humble source of the movement which led to the extravagant homage paid to Mary as an instrument in the Divine salvation. It is impossible here to follow the movement in all its stages, but one or two passages may be given. Among ecclesiastical writers Justin (*Dial.* 100) and more distinctly Irenæus are the first to represent Mary as having a share in redemption. "As mankind fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin (Eve), so is it delivered by means of a virgin (Mary), virginal disobedience being counterbalanced by virginal obedience."¹⁶⁶ At the end of the fourth century Ambrose further develops the contrast between Eve and Mary. "Through a woman came the evil, through another the good, because through Eve we fell and through Mary we stand; through Eve we were brought low, through Mary we are lifted up; through Eve we were condemned to bondage, through Mary we are made free. Eve took from us life, Mary gave us back life eternal; Eve delivered us to condemnation through the fruit of the tree, Mary redeemed us through the gift of the tree, since Christ hung on the cross like a fruit."¹⁶⁷ In the *Transitus Mariæ* (end of fourth century) we are brought even closer than in the sermons of Ambrose to the prevailing sentiment of the Church with regard to Mary's share in the

work of salvation. Christ is represented as saying to His dying mother : " Rejoice, for all grace is given to thee by my Father in heaven and by me and by the Holy Ghost ; whosoever calls upon thy name shall not be put to shame, but shall find comfort and help not in this world only, but in the future world before the face of my Father in heaven." How completely thoughts of this kind dominated the piety of a large part of Christendom we learn when we read the extravagances of de' Liguori's *Glories of Mary* (eighteenth century). Here we find Mary regarded as the one effectual intercessor for man before God, who looks on her prayers on behalf of the faithful as commands ; what may be obtained with difficulty through Jesus is easily possible through her. " Mary is our life, because she obtains for us the gifts of pardon . . . and perseverance " ; " Mary is the hope of all " ; " Mary is the peacemaker of sinners with God." " When she conceived the Son of God in her womb and afterwards gave Him birth, she obtained the half of the kingdom of God, so that she should be the queen of mercy, as Christ is the king of justice." ¹⁶⁸ Alfonso de' Liguori was canonized in 1839, and his most extravagant statements about Mary's share in redemption were endorsed by Pope Pius ix., when he declared : " I fear nothing ; I have the Madonna on my side." " Our salvation is founded on the Holy Virgin. . . . If there is hope and spiritual healing for us, it is from her solely and alone that we receive it." ¹⁶⁹

It was the glory of Christ which filled the mind of the author of the Protevangelium. His concern in writing the story of Mary's life was to safeguard the divine dignity of Jesus in the face of scurrilous attacks. But his work had an influence which he could never have anticipated, for as he shed back the Saviour's glory on her who bore Him, he helped to inaugurate a movement that ended in the exaltation and adoration of the Mother of

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Merely, by which for many the glory of Christ has been obscured.

We pass now to the consideration of a writing, commonly known as the CHILDHOOD GOSPEL OF THOMAS, which deals with the wonderful events in the boyhood of Jesus. The book is preserved in four recensions which vary considerably in length, and in the *Stichometry* of Nicephorus mention is made of a "Gospel according to Thomas" containing 1300 *stichoi*, which, if it had any relation to the Childhood Gospel, must accordingly have been a version about twice as long as the longest existing recension. Like the Protevangelium, the work enjoyed a remarkable popularity in the early Church, and the stories contained in it found a place in the later Gospels (Pseudo-Matthew and the Arabic Gospel) which treat of the Infancy and Childhood of Jesus.

Both Origen (*Hom. in Luc.* 1. 1) and Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 25. 6) mention a Gospel of Thomas which they rejected as heretical. Cyril of Jerusalem, too, states (*Catech.* iv. 36) that "the Manichæans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which with a tincture of the fragrance of the evangelic name destroys the souls of the more simple." There was a Gospel bearing the same name in use among Gnostics, and we are probably justified in assuming that it was this writing which Origen, Eusebius, and Cyril had in view. Of the Gnostic Gospel we know almost nothing. The only quotation which we have from it is a cryptic utterance of Jesus, reported by Hippolytus in the Fifth Book of his *Philosophoumena* (ch. 7) where, speaking of the Naassenes, he says: "They hand down an explicit passage occurring in the Gospel inscribed 'according to Thomas,' expressing themselves thus: 'He who seeks me will find me in children of seven years and upwards, for there concealed in the fourteenth æon I shall be made manifest.'"

Hippolytus does not cast much light on the meaning of this reputed saying of Jesus, and we must be content with observing that it has to do with young children. Further, Irenæus (*Hær.* i. 20. 1), referring to the Marcosians and their apocryphal writings, says: "Among other things they bring forward also that wicked story which relates that our Lord on being asked by His teacher, as the custom is, to say 'Alpha,' answered 'Alpha.' But when the teacher then bade Him say 'Beta,' the Lord replied, 'Do thou first tell me what Alpha is, and then I will tell thee what Beta is.' This they expound as meaning that He alone knew the Unknown, which He revealed under its type Alpha." This story of the boy Jesus and His teacher we find in the Childhood Gospel of Thomas. From these facts the inference seems to be clear that there was current in Gnostic circles a Gospel of Thomas dealing with events in Christ's boyhood, and that it stood in some relation to the work which we are now considering. That the two writings were not identical is certain; the quotation given by Hippolytus from the Gnostic Gospel does not occur in the other, which, moreover, shows very slight traces of anything that can properly be called Gnostic.

There are two possibilities as to the relation between the two Gospels. First, the Gnostics took a collection of stories about Christ's boyhood which were current in Church circles and attached their own meaning to them; or second, the extant Childhood Gospel of Thomas was derived from a Gnostic work, the objectionable interpretation of the stories being omitted. Schmidt, following Zahn, decides in favour of the former view and denies that the Childhood Gospel had a Gnostic origin.¹⁷⁰ In support of this he adduces two arguments: (1) In the passage quoted above, Irenæus in using the expression *προσπαράλαμβάνουσι* ("they bring forward in addition") of the action of the Marcosians, indicates that they, besides

relying on writings which they themselves had fabricated for the advancement of their views, employed material (in this particular case the story of Jesus at school) drawn from other sources and made it serve their purpose by the peculiar interpretation given to it; (2) the story of Jesus being taught His letters is found in the *Epistola Apostolorum*, a second-century anti-Gnostic work; and there the author, so far from betraying any consciousness that he is borrowing from a Gnostic writing which would have been objectionable to him, vouches for the truth of the story by giving it on the authority of the Twelve Apostles. On this view the collection of stories contained in the Childhood Gospel are supposed to have been used in Church circles to emphasize in the anti-Gnostic interest the true humanity of Jesus as one sharing the ordinary experiences of childhood, while at the same time making clear by the wonderful nature of His power and knowledge that He was divine. On the other hand, in favour of the latter view that the Gnostics were the first to draw up a Childhood Gospel, it is urged that the Church found in the uneventful character of Jesus' boyhood a proof of His true humanity, while Gnostics who denied this were concerned to show that even in boyhood Jesus possessed the divine powers exhibited in His public ministry.¹⁷¹ It is difficult to decide between the two opposing views, but on the whole it seems to me more probable that, while wonderful stories of Christ's boyhood may have been current in all sections of the Church before being committed to writing, the existing Childhood Gospel was compiled from a writing which was of Gnostic origin. The character of the book, with its stories loosely strung together, suggests (though it cannot be said to prove) that it was formed by a process of taking extracts from a longer writing. There are, moreover, slight indications that a work with more pronounced Gnostic features lay before the author and that he had removed

what was objectionable to orthodox sentiment. Who the author was we have no means of knowing—the book claims to be not a “Gospel,” but a recital by Thomas the Israelite philosopher of παιδικά—events in the boyhood—of Jesus Christ; but in any case his intention seems to have been “to preserve for orthodox readers the most interesting stories of the earlier heretical book.”¹⁷² He removed the esoteric teaching associated with the stories, a detail of which we probably find in the quotation given by Hippolytus, so that hardly a trace of it remains except in the incident of Jesus learning His letters at school. The result is a series of short narratives in which the boy Jesus is represented as a supernatural being, possessed of the knowledge of all mysteries and capable of working wonders, some of them of a morally offensive kind. “He is set forth as an *enfant terrible*, wicked, spiteful, striking terror into the hearts of his companions and of everybody else.”¹⁷³ As an imaginative reconstruction of Christ’s childhood it is utterly worthless, and is, in fact, a shocking caricature, but it serves to make clear how tenacious a hold the spirit of paganism maintained in some early Christian circles.

The character of the book will be best realized by giving a few extracts taken from the longer Greek recension. The first incident depicts Jesus at the age of five years as showing his contempt for the observances of the Jewish Sabbath. He “was playing at the crossing of a stream, and he collected the running water into pools and immediately made them pure. . . . And having made some soft clay he fashioned out of it twelve sparrows, and it was the Sabbath day when he did these things.” Word was taken to Joseph that his child was profaning the holy day, whereupon he came and said to Jesus, “Why art thou doing these things on the Sabbath, which it is not lawful to do? And Jesus clapped his hands and cried to the sparrows and said, Fly, and the sparrows spread their wings and flew away, uttering

cries" (ch. 2). Similar in their purely thaumaturgic character are two other wonders wrought by the child Jesus. "When he was six years old, his mother gave him a waterpot and sent him to draw water and to bring it home. He was jostled by the crowd and the waterpot was broken. But Jesus spreading out the cloak which he was wearing, filled it with water, and carried it to his mother" (ch. 11). When he was somewhat older, he was assisting Joseph in the carpenter's shop. Joseph, whose usual work was the making of ploughs and yokes, had received the important commission from a rich man to make a bed, and found himself in a difficulty because one of the boards was too short. "Then the child Jesus said to his father Joseph, Put the two boards on the ground and make them level at the one end. And Joseph did as the child had bidden him. Jesus then stood at the other end and took hold of the shorter board and stretched it and made it equal to the other" (ch. 13). All this is magic pure and simple and innocent in character, but there are other stories which through their sheer malevolence make an impression of the most painful kind. For instance, when Jesus was making pools by the side of the stream, a boy broke one of the dams with a stick. "And when Jesus saw what was done, he was annoyed and said to him, You mean and godless ass, what harm did the pools and the waters do you? Now you shall wither like a tree. . . . And immediately the boy withered altogether" (ch. 3). "On another occasion Jesus was walking through the village, and a boy who was running knocked him on the shoulder. Jesus was furious and said to him, That is the end of your journey. And immediately he fell down and died" (ch. 4). All the childhood wonders of Jesus are not, however, of this flagrantly objectionable kind. There are stories of miraculous healings and raisings from the dead; but even they give the impression that the good deeds were wrought not so much from motives of compassion as from

the desire on the part of the boy Jesus to show with what ease he could do the most marvellous things. After he had restored a child to life and the crowd stood in amazement, "Jesus went out and played with the other children" (ch. 17).

Apparently the most popular of the tales of Christ's childhood was that which told of his wonderful knowledge when he was sent to school. Three times in the longest recension of the book we are given a picture of Christ in the presence of his teachers, and in each case the aim is to exhibit him as endowed with a wisdom beyond that of the wisest in this world. The story of Alpha and Beta which Irenæus found in the writings of the Marcosians appears twice in the narrative. It is made clear that Jesus went to school not to learn but to confound his teachers by his knowledge of mysteries too deep for ordinary human understanding. This is what happened when the first teacher, Zacchæus by name, attempted to teach Jesus the alphabet. "Looking at the teacher Zacchæus, he said to him, 'Thou who knowest not the nature of Alpha, how canst thou teach others Beta? Thou hypocrite! first teach Alpha if thou canst, and then we shall believe thee about Beta.' Then he began to catechize the teacher about the first letter, and he was unable to answer him. When many were listening, the child said to Zacchæus, 'Hear, master, the disposition of the first letter and observe that it has straight lines and a middle stroke crossing those which thou seest to belong to one another, lines which go together, the upper part advancing and again reuniting, triple and homogeneous, principal and subordinate, of the same measure. There thou hast the lines of Alpha'" (ch. 6). If we are right in supposing that the stories in the Childhood Gospel were compiled from a Gnostic writing, there was doubtless in the original work much more of the same kind of thing, with an imposing display of cabalistic learning, and this indeed is suggested by what follows. We read that "when the teacher

Zacchæus heard the boy declare so many and so great allegories of the first letter," he was quite overwhelmed and was so deeply humiliated that he entreated Joseph to remove Jesus from school. "Take him away, I beseech you, brother Joseph: I cannot bear the severity of his glance; I am bewildered by his words. This child is not earthborn; he is able to subdue even fire. Perhaps he was begotten before the world was made. . . . He is something great, either a god or an angel, or I know not what to say" (ch. 7).

In the closing chapter we have the story of Jesus among the doctors in the temple when he was twelve years old. The narrative keeps pretty close to the Lucan account, but there are additions which bring out once more the extraordinary knowledge of the child Jesus. "All were giving heed and wondering how he who was but a child reduced the elders and the doctors of the people to silence, through explaining the principal points of the law and the parables of the prophets. . . . And the scribes and Pharisees said (to Mary), . . . Blessed art thou among women, for God has blessed the fruit of thy womb; such glory and such virtue and wisdom we have never seen or even heard of" (ch. 19).

That stories of the character which we have described should ever have been told of Jesus is astonishing. They reveal an amazing state of mind in those who circulated them and the complete absence of any glimmer of understanding of the life and spirit of Jesus Christ. It was perhaps inevitable that the single incident from Christ's boyhood reported in St. Luke's Gospel should have suggested the filling up of the picture of His early days, but that the tales should have been of a character so extraordinary and so remote from the spirit of Jesus is well nigh unintelligible. The explanation probably is that when the desire was felt to have a witness to Christ's divine origin in a miraculous childhood, stories of wonder-children already

existing, which had proceeded from circles of thought completely pagan in their character, were made use of,¹⁷⁴ their transference to Christ being made possible by the disposition to regard as divine the mere fact of extraordinary power and knowledge. The apostolic romances which appeared about the same period as the Childhood Gospel are full of similar non-moral prodigies—an indication that in some Christian circles the ethical significance of a miracle had become a matter of small importance as compared with its startling and supernatural character. In such an intellectual atmosphere it was possible to take the tales of marvellous children which were ready to hand and to associate them with Jesus as an evidence of His possession of divine power from the very beginning of His life. That such legends of Christ's boyhood were circulating before the Gnostics first reduced them to writing is rendered probable in view of their popular character. They were acceptable to the Gnostics, to whom every suggestion of real humanity in the case of Christ was obnoxious, because they found in them a proof that He did not belong to this world, but was a heavenly being raised above all human limitations. For such a being there could be no thought of a real human development; He must as a child have had from the beginning the power and wisdom which the evangelic tradition showed Him to possess in manhood. This was in fact a docetic conception; formally the human nature of Christ was admitted—Jesus was a boy among boys, taking part in the ordinary village games—but in reality it was denied. Thus to the child Jesus wonderful works were natural and education was unnecessary; what need was there for one to be taught who in virtue of His divine nature already possessed all knowledge? It is clear from this that the interest which led the Gnostics to make the use they did of the childhood of Jesus was their interest to show that whatever appearance of humanity Christ possessed He was in reality a divine being.

The same interest in Christ's divinity makes it in some degree intelligible why the Childhood stories, purged from distinctively Gnostic elements, found favour among orthodox Christians. Against one misconception of Christ's person they resolutely set their face; they refused to entertain the thought that Jesus was a man like other men, until at His baptism a divine being descended and dwelt in Him. They saw in the miraculous splendour of His ministry a sure sign of His divinity, and as it seemed to them, there was no better proof available that He had been divine from birth than that His childhood should reveal the marvellous gifts and wisdom of His later years. This meant, of course, the dimming of His real humanity, a blindness to the fact that as a child He had experienced a true human growth, increasing in wisdom and in stature (Luke ii. 52), but on this point the faith of the early Church was often wavering; the one concern of Christians in matters of doctrine was to bear witness to the truth that the Lord whom they worshipped was divine. Thus sharing, as many of them did, the spirit of the age which saw divinity in portents, they were able to disregard the ethical character of the wonderful stories of Christ's boyhood and to find in them conclusive evidence of His supernatural origin. Truth has often been served by foolish arguments, but surely never was it served so foolishly as when men sought to establish faith in our Lord's divinity by means so strangely un-Christian as the Childhood stories of Thomas the Israelite.

CHAPTER VI.

APOCRYPHAL ACTS OF THE APOSTLES : INTRODUCTORY.

IN the second half of the second century we find the beginnings of a romantic literature which dealt with the fortunes, ministry, and teaching of individual apostles. That such a literature should have arisen then is significant. It is an indication of the profound reverence with which the apostles were regarded, and of the unique position of authority which they had come to occupy in the estimation of the Church. Two or three generations earlier the personal experiences of the apostles and their missionary labours in the various fields of their activity seem to have aroused no particular interest, not at any rate to the extent of creating any general desire for writings giving information about them. Apart from the story of St. Paul, whose missionary career is sketched in the canonical Acts with a comparative fulness of detail, almost nothing was recorded of the labours of the apostles in spreading the Gospel. Even in St. Paul's case the motive of the narrative was not biographical; the aim of the writer, although his sympathetic concern in the career of one whose fortunes he had shared is quite manifest, was to exhibit the main stages of the triumphal progress of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. But in the second century things were different; there was an extraordinary awakening of interest in the apostolic age and in its leading personalities. The apostles, in the sense of the Twelve with

the addition of St. Paul, were the object of an almost superstitious veneration as the infallible authorities divinely appointed to proclaim and safeguard Christian truth and to give guidance and stability to the Church. There was no longer any consciousness of the differences which had existed among them; nothing or very little was remembered of their human frailties or of the diversity of their gifts in fulfilling their vocation; they had become an ideal unity in which was found, what the Church so eagerly desired, the sole and decisive standard of Christian faith and practice. To this remarkable and historically momentous position they had attained as the result of a slow development of thought, promoted by influences both from within the Church and from without, and although the steps in the process are somewhat obscure, the significance of the result for the history of the Church is so far-reaching that a digression may be allowed in the endeavour to show how it came about.

From the beginning the original apostles,¹⁷⁵ in virtue of their choice by Jesus to form an inner circle and of the intimacy of their intercourse with Him, held a place of peculiar honour in the growing Christian community. The fact that after the Lord's ascension it was one of the first solemn acts of the disciples in Jerusalem to elect a successor to Judas Iscariot, shows the importance that was attached to maintaining the circle of the Twelve complete. The appointment of Matthias may have been inspired by the natural feeling that the symbolic number chosen by our Lord Himself should be kept intact, but it was at the same time an indication of the high prestige which the original apostles enjoyed, as men fitted by their training and opportunities and (perhaps we may add) by their personal qualities to be the natural leaders and teachers of the infant Church. As those who had been taught by the Master Himself and were in a position through their close fellowship

with Him to bear sure witness to His words and life and resurrection from the dead, they exercised authority in the primitive community, but it was an authority personal and not official, an authority, moreover, which cannot be said to have been in any sense exclusive or unique, as is seen most plainly by the high position occupied by James, the Lord's brother. Their function was to be witnesses for Christ, to communicate to others the things which they had seen and heard, and in this ministry, although they held precedence, they did not stand alone. Others besides them could proclaim the Good News on the strength of their personal knowledge of Jesus, and in the earliest days of the Christian mission men like Stephen and Philip, who stood outside the circle of the Twelve, played a prominent part in the extension of the Gospel. And not only so. It is clear that in the first Christian generation the name of "apostle" was not restricted to the Twelve (who at the most were ἀπόστολοι κατ' ἐξοχήν), but was applied to all who on account of their suitable gifts and endowment by the Spirit were set apart as missionaries by the Church. Even as late as the beginning of the second century, as we learn from the *Didache* (ch. 11), there was a class of ministers in the Church bearing the name of "apostles" to signify their missionary vocation. But at least a full generation before this a narrower conception of the apostolate had begun to take shape as the result, there is some reason to believe, of the agitation directed against the authority of St. Paul. Those who impugned his authority did not deny that he was an apostle: his missionary activity gave him a right to the name; but they claimed for themselves an apostleship of a higher order--"super-apostles" (2 Cor. xi. 5)¹⁷⁶ St. Paul termed them with biting irony--because as emissaries of the Church in Jerusalem they had behind them the authority of the Twelve. St. Paul passionately refused to be accounted an apostle of

the second rank. Vital interests were at stake—the Gospel which he preached, its freedom from the fetters of the Jewish law, and these were imperilled, were indeed inevitably doomed, unless his apostleship were recognized as possessing an authority given directly from the Lord Himself. It is the magnitude of the issues involved in his controversy with Judaistic opponents that explains the emphasis with which he characterized his apostolic vocation in Gal. i. 1: “Paul, an apostle, not by human appointment nor by any man’s commission, but by Jesus Christ.” Not only would he not admit the superior claims of those who sought to undermine his influence, but he refused to acknowledge that their authority was equal to his own; if any could be accounted his equals as representatives of Christ, they were the Twelve in Jerusalem alone, who had the Lord’s personal commission as he himself had. The success which followed St. Paul’s vindication of his claim (Gal. ii. 7 ff.) had an unanticipated but inevitable consequence. In the mind of the Church there was lodged a conception of the apostolate which took root, developed, and finally established itself—the conception of a spiritual authority, derived immediately from Christ and therefore incontestable, vested in the Twelve and the Apostle to the Gentiles.¹⁷⁷

It was no doubt only gradually that the Church realized the full significance of this conception. The progress of events, however, forced it into clearer consciousness. As the fresh creative period of Christianity passed and was succeeded by an age of increasing organization and of reflexion on the facts and truths of the Gospel, the need was felt for an authoritative standard to control inevitable vagaries of faith, order, and life, and that was found in “the apostles.” It is significant that in the Apocalypse of St. John the foundation stones of the wall of the New Jerusalem bear the names of “the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (xxi. 14). By the last decade of the

first century "the apostles" as a corporate body occupy in some circles a position of quite exceptional importance as a divine medium of revelation. They are accorded a place in the chain of supreme authorities by which Christian truth is guaranteed from stage to stage. In 1 Clement (42. 1) we read : "The apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ ; Jesus Christ was sent out from God. So then Christ is from God, and the apostles are from Christ. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order." In Ignatius the apostles take rank alongside of Christ as a fountain of authority : "Seek earnestly to be confirmed in the ordinances of the Lord and of the apostles" (*Magn.* 13. 1). A generation later, stress is laid in 2 Peter (iii. 2) on "the commandment given through your apostles from the Lord and Saviour." There is no need to adduce evidence in further detail ; "apostolic" had by the beginning of the second century become a synonym for that which was authoritatively Christian. This conviction, which was quickened by the inner necessities of the Church, gathered strength when the Gnostic storm burst in the first half of the second century. The sense of crisis drove the Church solidly back on an external authority against which no appeal could be admitted. Apostolic writings were collected and became the norm by which every doctrine or practice was judged. The infallible nature of this authority was not contested. Both parties in the Gnostic controversy made their appeal to it. It is true that the Gnostics relied on a secret revelation which they claimed to have received, but in setting forth their views in opposition to the accepted tradition they relied on the authority of apostolic names. Marcion was, in fact, the first to draw up a canon of apostolic writings to support and propagate the doctrines which he taught. Books bearing the names of different apostles were issued, purporting to contain a genuine tradition, as a means of winning acceptance

for opinions of the most diverse kinds. To counteract false teaching set forth under the authority of individual apostles, the Church appealed to the consentient voice of all the apostles. Apostolic unity became a dogma; Ignatius speaks of a council or college of the apostles (συνέδριον τῶν ἀποστόλων, *Magn.* 6. 1; σύνδεσμος τῶν ἀποστόλων, *Trall.* 3. 1). The recently edited *Epistola Apostolorum* is a counterblast to heresy issued in the name of the united apostolate. The earliest Church manual is entitled "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." An early legend, that the Twelve remained together in Jerusalem for twelve years before entering on their mission work in different parts of the world, gives expression to the conviction of apostolic unity universally accepted by the Church. Thus the apostles, regarded not so much as individuals but as members of a sacred college, were recognized as the channel through which the mind, will, and nature of Christ were infallibly made known. What was spoken by them was the utterance of Christ: what was wrought by them was the work of Christ. They were the personal media through whom the exalted Lord continued to reveal Himself. "We receive Peter and the other apostles," said Serapion, bishop of Antioch, at the close of the second century, "even as we receive Christ" (Eusebius, *H.E.* vi. 12).

Such, then, was the position universally accorded to the apostles by the Church in the second century. It is not surprising that in the atmosphere of religious veneration which surrounded them there should have been felt an eager and widespread desire for some intimate knowledge of their life and ministry. The canonical Acts did not satisfy this craving. It was concerned with only one or two of the apostolic figures, and the information which it supplied was for the most part of an extremely fragmentary kind. Of St. Peter little was told beyond a few incidents of his earlier activity in Palestine,

and even the narrative of St. Paul's mission work, given in orderly sequence, was at the best a rough outline with many gaps ¹⁷⁸ and faulty perspective in detail. There was a still more serious defect, from the point of view of the second century, in the complete silence with regard to the work and fortunes of the other members of the apostolic band. Whatever may have been the extent of their missionary labours, it was at least believed from very early days that they had gone far and wide preaching the Gospel, and although that belief may have had no other foundation than the desire to enhance their authority, we cannot definitely say that it was not based on the facts of the case. But however that may be, there was in the canonical Acts for those who desired knowledge of all the apostles a patent incompleteness. The Church of the second century endeavoured to repair the defect by an eager search for apostolic traditions. The result was disappointing. There were traditions in existence but not to any great extent, and those which existed were of little value and in the matter of trustworthiness, although that was not seriously weighed, not above suspicion. The almost complete disappearance of reliable information about the early spread of the Gospel and the activities of most of the apostles may seem surprising, but the fact is to be accounted for by the intensity of the Church's expectation of the imminent appearing of the Lord and by its consequent indifference to the events of the past. Thus it happened that when there came an awakening of interest in the apostolic age, there was nothing of any moment, beyond the stories in Acts, on which it could take hold. The insatiable craving demanded satisfaction. Legends were invented, and in the credulous temper of the age almost anything was believed. This is not to say that the stories in the apocryphal Acts were in every case utterly devoid of historical foundation. Reliable traditions here and there were no doubt preserved and were

incorporated in the narrative ; in some episodes to which we are inclined to give no credence because of the manifest presence of fictitious details, there may be a reminiscence of an actual fact ; but in general it may be said with truth that the legendary element preponderates to such an extent that this whole body of literature lacks almost any suggestion of historical reality.

The writers of the apostolic romances had little conscience for the facts of history—history, indeed, was not their concern—and their audience, whose appetite was whetted for any tales bearing on the heroic age of the faith, was not disposed to be critical. But at least in compiling their books they endeavoured to give the narrative an air of verisimilitude by embodying or adapting incidents taken from the canonical Acts and (in the case of the Acts of Paul) by using it as the general framework in which the new material was inserted. That was the least that a romancer of any skill might have been expected to do, and it is beside the mark to charge the authors of the apocryphal Acts, in their use of the narrative current in the Church, with a deliberate intention to deceive. On this we shall have something to say in a subsequent chapter (p. 270). In any case there is an unmistakable dependence of the later romances on the Acts which the Church canonized. Whether it is just to say, on the ground of this connexion, that both belong to the same literary *εἶδος* is open to question. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the apocryphal Acts have an affinity with the contemporary travel-romances, by which they seem to have been strongly influenced. That is plainly the case in the Acts of Thomas, which betrays the influence of the Life of Apollonius by Philostratus written about a generation earlier. But the question of literary type is after all a small matter. Even those who assert identity of type in the canonical and uncanonical Acts admit the startling difference which exists in the material which is used and in the manner

in which it is treated. It is this difference which is important, and when due weight has been given to it, the canonical and the apocryphal Acts fall into widely different categories.¹⁷⁹ The former, when all deductions are made, is an historical work of extreme value; the latter simply swarm with tales of the most incredible kind, which set forth the wonderful deeds wrought by the apostles, many of them ludicrous and fantastically absurd, and in general of such a character as to suggest that divine working was conceived in terms of sheer power and magic. Thus the miraculous deeds of the apostles appear as the crowning and decisive evidence of the divine origin of Christianity. Miracle was the sure means of leading to repentance and conversion. The Christian faith confronted paganism as an unmistakable ethical reality, energizing through beneficence and a manner of life in sharp reaction against the laxity of contemporary morals: that fact is apparent in the apostolic romances; nevertheless the superiority of Christianity was regarded as being most signally proved by the gift of working wonders, possessed in a supreme degree by its divinely accredited representatives. The rubric was: without apostles, no miracle; without miracle, no faith. Hence the apostles appear in the apocryphal Acts as raised far above the ordinary levels of humanity, as beings conversant with all mysteries and endowed with supernatural powers to which no limit could be set. In this respect there is a disposition to obliterate any distinction between them and Jesus Christ. The details in the narratives of healings and exorcism are closely parallel to the stories as reported in the Gospels; demons whose influence is threatened address the apostles as once they addressed Jesus. And further: as compared with the canonical Acts the later romances not only reveal a sensational heightening of the value of the miraculous, but they exhibit a striking change in its character. The former reports wonderful deeds

wrought by the apostles, but it does so as a rule in a temper of sobriety and restraint, and the sense of beneficent purpose is for the most part clearly discernible: the latter throw aside all restraint and revel in extravagant manifestations of the marvellous and grotesque. In the apostles' activity the miraculous has become the normal: the raising of the dead is almost an everyday occurrence; the atmosphere is heavy with portent and magic. A smoked fish comes to life and swims (*Acts of Peter*, 13); a broken statue is made whole by sprinkling it with consecrated water (*ibid.* 11); an infant of seven months speaks in a man's voice and works a miracle in Christ's name (*ibid.* 15); wild animals become suddenly docile and put themselves at an apostle's service (*Acts of Thomas*, 70). And with all this there are frequent interventions of the Divine in supernatural appearances and events. Christ is seen in many forms, but most frequently as an apostle's double: one of the titles by which He is addressed is "polymorphous Jesus" (*Acts of Thomas*, 48, 153); heavenly messengers speak in vision and dream; the powers of nature strike dismay into the hearts of the ungodly and come to the help of the faithful in the hour of danger; the apostles after death appear to their friends as Christ appeared after His resurrection.

It must not, however, be imagined that the apostolic romances, with all this phantasmagoria of miracle, were intended merely to satisfy a depraved appetite for highly coloured tales, which should illumine the darkness in which the apostles had been left by the records of an earlier age. If there were nothing more in them than the silly and preposterous stories to which reference has been made, they would justly be dismissed from serious consideration. At the most they would afford material for the student of human credulity and would serve to illustrate the inveterate tendency of the human mind to find divinity in portents and unnatural events rather than in spiritual influences

which work for moral ends. But it is not for their marvels or with any expectation of increasing our knowledge of the apostles that we study these writings. As historical sources of information about the apostolic age they are almost wholly worthless. Their value lies in another direction, in the picture which they give of Christian thought and feeling in the popular circles in which they were current. They are important historical documents from which much may be learned, not as has been said about the age with which they profess to deal, but about the age which gave them birth. Even had there been no other aim in their production than to reconstruct on the basis of vague tradition, with every embellishment of fancy, the career of individual apostles, it would still have been possible to learn from them something of the character of the generation in which they were written. There is no literary work but has its water-marks of place and time, none that does not reveal in some measure the spirit of the age, and that more fully than the writer is conscious of. But as it happens, in the writing of the apostolic romances there was a clearly defined purpose which increases their value enormously in this respect. They purported to be narratives of apostles' deeds ; they were in reality writings designed to set forth under apostolic authority prevailing ideals of life and conceptions of Christian truth. It is accordingly as transcripts of second-century thought and feeling in the circles in which they arose that they are important. The student of Church history may seek to determine whether any of the apostolic traditions which they preserve are worthy of credence, and if so, to what extent, but it is not in these traditions that their real value lies. That consists in their being writings meant to suit the popular taste, with a vivid power of appeal, reflecting views which it was desired to confirm and propagate by representing the apostles as the authors of them.

The Acts which concern us are the so-called "Leucian" Acts, belonging to the second century and the early part of the third. They comprise the Acts of five apostles which were originally issued separately but were at a later time collected into a *corpus*, the collection having been made, it may with some confidence be concluded, in the fourth century by the Manichæans of North Africa, who used them instead of the canonical Acts.¹⁸⁰ Evidence for the existence of a collection of apocryphal Acts in use among heretics meets us in the fourth and fifth centuries in both Eastern and Western writers, but the first clear notice of the fivefold *corpus* in association with the name of Leucius occurs in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the second half of the ninth century, who in giving an account of the books which he read during his absence on a mission to Baghdad mentions "the so-called Wanderings of the Apostles, in which are included Acts of Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas, Paul." "The author of these Acts (he adds), as the book itself makes plain, was Leucius Charinus."¹⁸¹ Whether Photius found the name of Leucius attached to the whole work, or whether his statement was an inference from some passage in one of its parts in which the authorship of Leucius was revealed, cannot be determined, but in any case the Acts themselves make it clear by marked differences in style and doctrinal standpoint that they are not from one hand. Of "Leucius" nothing certain is known. He is an altogether shadowy figure whose name may have been assumed, as James suggests,¹⁸² because of its similarity to that of Luke, and the only fact in common in different traditions regarding him is that he had some sort of connexion with the Apostle John. But even this is extremely doubtful. References to him are fairly frequent in Western writers as the author of heretical books, and in particular the Acts of John and, less certainly, the Acts of Andrew are associated with

his name; while the only mention of him in the East, before Photius, occurs in Epiphanius, by whom he was apparently reckoned the foremost among the followers of St. John in combating heresy (*Hær.* 51. 6). The traditions reported by Epiphanius are always to be received with caution, and this reference to Leucius as belonging to the *entourage* of the apostle may simply have been due to the vague knowledge of a tradition which was ultimately based on the Acts of John. Schmidt is probably right when he says¹⁸³ that "there never was in catholic circles a personality with the name of Leucius, held in high esteem as a disciple of John in Asia Minor, whom the author of the Acts of John used for his purpose." But be that as it may, we are on firm ground when we register the fact that "Leucius" was prominently mentioned in the Manichæan controversy as the author of certain Acts received by the Manichæans but repudiated by the Church. It is a fair inference that through the prominence thus given to him (whoever he was) it became the general belief that the whole Manichæan *corpus* was his work, and in course of time he seems to have been regarded as an arch-heretic of earlier days—the so-called Gelasian decree calls him "*discipulus diaboli*"—to whom it was customary to attribute writings of an apocryphal kind.

A double attempt about the beginning of the fifth century to secure a footing in the Church for the Leucian Acts led to their unqualified condemnation by the ecclesiastical authorities. The Manichæans in their desire to have apostolic sanction for their peculiar doctrines rejected the canonical Acts and put in its place the fivefold *corpus* which they had formed, while in Spain the Priscillianists made use of the Leucian Acts in addition to the canonical. The reaction on the part of the Church was sharp and decided. The Leucian Acts were branded as heretical. The most sweeping judgment was pronounced by Leo I. (about 450), who declared that "they should not only be forbidden

but utterly swept away and burned. For although (he says) there are certain things in them which seem to have the appearance of piety, yet they are never free from poison but secretly work through the allurements of fables, so that they ensnare in every form of possible error those who are seduced by the narration of marvellous things." This must be regarded as a singularly apt and just characterization of the Leucian Acts taken as a whole, and it is entirely in accord with ecclesiastical opinion of which we have any record from the beginning of the fourth century. The criticism of Photius, who certainly did not mince matters in his condemnation of the Acts, is interesting and may be given in full. "The language (he says) is irregular and strange, for the author employs constructions and modes of expression which are sometimes well chosen but most frequently are vulgar and commonplace. He shows no trace of the uniform and simple language and of the natural grace by which the evangelic and apostolic word is characterized. He abounds in follies and contradictions, for he states that there is an evil God of the Jews, whose servant Simon the magician was, different from Christ whom he calls good, and he jumbles and confuses everything, calling Him now Father, now Son. He declares that Christ was never truly incarnate but only in appearance, that He appeared to His disciples now as a youth, now as an old man, and now as a child, of varying height and even of such a stature that His head reached to heaven. He also invents many extravagant and preposterous tales about the Cross, saying that Christ was not crucified, but that another took His place and that He laughed at His crucifiers for that reason. He rejects lawful marriage, and regards all begetting as evil and as the work of the Evil One. He narrates in his folly works of demons, and tells of absurd and childish resurrections of men, oxen, and other animals. The Iconoclasts believe that in the Acts of John he declares himself opposed to

images. In short, this book contains a thousand things which are puerile, incredible, absurd, false, extravagant, inconsistent, impious, and godless. If any one were to call it the fountain and mother of all heresy, he would not be far from the truth.”¹⁸⁴

In the condemnation thus pronounced on the Leucian *corpus* as a whole the Acts of Paul was involved, although at the beginning of the Manichæan controversy it is clear that Augustine, as well as the Church generally, distinguished between it and the other Acts and regarded it not only as orthodox, but as holding a quasi-canonical position. This attitude to the Pauline Acts reflected the opinion of earlier writers, particularly in the East. Eusebius places it among the *vóθα*, the lowest class of catholic writings, along with the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Peter, Barnabas, and the *Didache*, and he draws a sharp distinction between writings of that class and “those which heretics put forth under apostolic names . . . such as the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles.” These, he declares, are in style far removed from the apostolic manner; in thought and doctrine they are in complete disaccord with true orthodoxy and are to be rejected as utterly absurd and impious.¹⁸⁵ It was, accordingly, an unkind fate which led to the inclusion of the Acts of Paul in the Manichæan *corpus*. It fell from the high regard in which it was almost universally held, and shared the common ban laid on the Leucian Acts.

Although from the time of Eusebius onwards the opinion of the Church both in East and West was distinctly unfavourable to the apocryphal Acts (the Acts of Paul, to begin with, alone excepted), that does not commit us to the judgment that they had their origin in circles which were regarded from the first as heretical in character. It is a well-known fact in the history of opinion that the heresy of one age has not infrequently become the orthodoxy of the next, but it is not

sufficiently recognized that the converse is also true. This must be kept clearly in mind, when we proceed to estimate the value of the apostolic romances as Christian documents of the second century. If we are to view them fairly, we must not allow our judgment to be determined by the severe strictures passed on them in a generation when doctrinal standards had in some important respects materially changed. It is the one capital mistake in dealing with the records of the past to measure and judge the thoughts, beliefs, and morality of one age from the standpoint of a later time, and to regard this judgment as reflecting contemporary opinion. Theologians of the Nicene and post-Nicene periods naturally took exception to many of the doctrines which appear in the pages of the apocryphal Acts, but that does not warrant the inference that these doctrines were considered objectionable in the age to which they belong.¹⁸⁶ It is with this *caveat* in mind that we approach the question of the doctrinal character of the early apostolic romances.

There are two sharply divergent views as to the place to be accorded to the Leucian Acts in the Christian literature of the second century. The one we find most clearly represented in R. A. Lipsius' great work, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden* (1883-1890), the other in the writings of Carl Schmidt, particularly in his book, *Die alten Petrusakten* (1903). Lipsius maintained that the Leucian Acts without exception were in their origin heretical, that they were the products of Gnostic schools issued with the intention of spreading their tenets and customs in the Church by means of stories suited to the popular taste. The Acts in their original shape had not been preserved; they had undergone revision at the hands of Catholic writers who aimed at bringing them into harmony with orthodox feeling. Passages unambiguously heretical had been altered or toned down, but in spite of the

efforts of the revisers the traces of Gnostic doctrine were still clearly discernible. Apart from docetic and encratite opinions, Lipsius found an indication of the Gnostic origin of the Acts in the extravagant character of the marvels recorded. Schmidt's view is diametrically opposed to this. He asserted that Gnostic Acts never existed, and maintained that the Leucian Acts arose within the Church at a time when Gnostic views, not sharply defined, were widely held and had not provoked hostility. Thus regarded, the Leucian Acts are important sources for our knowledge of the popular Christianity of the period. On the broad issue, as I think will appear when the contents of the Acts are examined, the decision must rest in favour of the latter view. Lipsius made the mistake of regarding as Gnostic certain elements in the Acts which cannot justly be said to have that character at all,¹⁸⁷ and even in those sections where affinities with Gnostic thought are unmistakable he did not make sufficient allowance for the fact that many orthodox communities in Asia Minor and elsewhere shared a common intellectual atmosphere with the adherents of Gnostic circles. Further, the possibility is not to be excluded that the primitive Acts, which in later days were much used by heretics, were adapted by them to give clearer expression to their peculiar doctrines. There is one fact which springs at once to the eye when we regard the apocryphal Acts, as we are probably entitled to do, as a reflexion of popular Christianity in the age in which they originated—the fact of its discordant and multiform character. This is only what one might have expected. "Popular Christianity" is a vague and elastic term; neither in the second century nor in the twentieth does it connote a uniform and harmonious body of feeling and opinion with clearly defined features; then as now it embraced doctrinal conceptions and practices of a widely different order. It is apparent that the several apocryphal Acts do not give us one

clear picture with mere differences in light and shade ; they are, as Photius remarked, often inconsistent with one another and represent different doctrinal positions. The Acts of Paul, whatever we may think of its uncompromising asceticism, is otherwise in complete accord with second-century orthodoxy, while the others are tainted in varying degrees with conceptions which are Gnostic in tone. The truth seems to be that the Leucian Acts, if we may anticipate the result of the scrutiny of the facts, are neither distinctly Gnostic nor distinctly Catholic, but are the vario-coloured products of an age when Christian thought was in a state of considerable confusion and exposed, especially in communities which lay aside from the main track of Church life, to alien influences of many kinds.¹⁸⁸

It bears eloquent witness to the place which the Leucian Acts held in the favour of Christian people generally that, even at a time when their heretical character was recognized and denounced, the Church was not content merely to express its condemnation of them. The uncompromising judgment of Leo I., that " they should be utterly swept away and burned," did not reflect the true mind of the Church. Thus we find that Philastrius of Brescia in his book *De hæresibus*, c. 88, written in the last quarter of the fourth century, declared with reference to the Acts in use among the Manichæans that they might be read for the moral edification of mature Christians, but that they should not be put into the hands of all. This discriminating judgment on the worth of the apocryphal Acts for those who were able to discount their heretical doctrines was due to the attraction of the wonderful deeds of the apostles which they recorded, and to their exaltation of the celibate ideal which naturally appealed to Christians in an age when monasticism was rapidly growing. These things were too much to the liking of Catholic communities to be sacrificed because of their unfortunate association with unorthodox opinions. Accordingly

Church writers, sensitive to popular feeling and conscious that no ban laid on the heretical books would eradicate the taste for the vivid colours of the apostolic romance, drew a distinction between the narrative of the apocryphal Acts and the doctrines set forth in them. This is most plainly seen in the words of pseudo-Mellitus, who edited for use in Catholic circles a group of stories taken from the Acts of John. He says in the prologue to his book : " I wish your brotherhood to be on your guard against a certain Leucius who wrote Acts of the Apostles . . . who spoke very many true things about the great deeds which the Lord wrought by them, but uttered many falsehoods about doctrine." This was the point of view from which the Leucian Acts were commonly regarded. Their teaching in many respects was false, but the wonderful deeds which they narrated were genuine. This commingling of truth with error was explained by the convenient assumption that primitive Acts of the apostles had existed, which had been tampered with by heretics and adapted for their own use. In these circumstances Church writers set themselves the task of re-writing the heretical Acts, omitting what was doctrinally offensive and retaining the miraculous and supernatural elements. And not only so, but the material of the Acts was freely manipulated in the fabrication of " Lives " of other apostles, as we find in the collection of Abdias in the sixth century. In succeeding centuries until the eleventh, literature of this kind, dealing with the apostles, flourished as a rank growth and was, as Harnack says, " the favourite reading of Christians from Ireland to the Abyssinian mountains and from Persia to Spain." Apostolic legends were reproduced in religious poems ; they appeared in martyrologies and calendars ; they formed the subject of homilies on the feast-days of the apostles, and incidents from them were depicted in Christian art. New cycles of legends arose in the Syrian and Coptic Churches. The

Coptic stories were translated into Arabic and from Arabic into Ethiopic (Gadla Hawaryât—the Contendings of the Apostles). All this gives point to Harnack's words when he says :¹⁸⁹ "The history of apocryphal literature is a proof that the prohibition of books is powerless against a pressing need. In all sections and in all languages of the Church this literature is perhaps the most strongly represented, alongside of the canonical writings, in a form, as one would expect, that is always changing to suit the taste of the age. It was really *apocryphal*, that is to say, it had what may be termed a subterranean existence ; but suppressed and persecuted though it was, it always forced its way back to the surface, and at last the public tradition of the Church was defenceless against it."

The most prominent feature of the Leucian Acts, and one common to all of them, is their inculcation of *extreme asceticism*, particularly with regard to marriage. Indeed it may be said that the dominant *motif* in each of the Acts is the encratite ideal as obligatory on all Christians. The "contendings" of the apostles, their trials and their eventual martyrdom are in almost every case due to their preaching the sinfulness of conjugal life, and to their success in persuading women to embrace virginity or to reject the society of their husbands.¹⁹⁰ The Acts do not merely rank marriage below virginity—from the second century onwards, that may be regarded as the universal opinion in the Catholic Church ; they go a step farther and make abstinence from marriage the chief moral requirement and the supreme condition of winning everlasting blessedness. How did the writers come to this extreme position ? Was it the result of influences non-Christian in their origin : was it the consequence of the impact on Christian minds of the teaching of Gnostics, who from the point of view of their thorough-going dualism for the most part looked on marriage as sinful ? Or were there tendencies within the Church itself which,

strengthened no doubt by the existence of rigorous ascetic views in the Hellenistic world, led not merely to the exaltation of virginity as the crowning glory of Christian morality, but to a sense of its obligation as a condition of salvation ? To answer these questions we must glance for a moment at the teaching with regard to marriage in the New Testament.

Despite assertions to the contrary,¹⁹¹ the encratite ideal as obligatory on Christians finds no support in the teaching of Jesus. Asceticism as an absolute moral principle was entirely foreign to His healthy and joyous view of life. Unlike His forerunner John the Baptist, who took up a negative attitude to life, Jesus affirmed by word and by His own manner of living that life and all its natural relationships were capable of being consecrated to God (cf. Matt. xi. 18 f. ; Mark ii. 18 f.). In conformity with this our Lord upheld the sacredness and the inviolability of marriage. He did not regard it as a supreme good ; it was a relationship meant for this world alone, and accordingly not to be perpetuated in a sort of Mohammedan paradise (Mark xii. 25 ; Matt. xxii. 30). On the other hand, He recognized as good and countenanced a life of celibacy, when it was voluntarily accepted for the sake of the Divine kingdom ; there were some people, He acknowledged, who had such a vocation (Matt. xix. 12) ; but under the normal conditions of our life on earth He looked on marriage as a sacred ordinance established by God in the creation of man and woman—a relationship so holy as to be indissoluble while life lasts (Mark x. 6 ff. ; Matt. xix. 4 ff.). Death annuls the marriage-bond ; in the resurrection life the relationship does not exist. “ When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage ” (Mark xii. 25). It is perhaps significant that Luke, whose ascetic leanings are well known, makes a change in this saying, so that it may be interpreted as meaning that none but the unmarried can inherit the Divine kingdom :

"the children of this age marry and are given in marriage; but *they who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead* neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Luke xx. 34 f.). It is, however, doubtful whether this Lucan form of Christ's saying was meant to suggest that marriage was an absolute bar to entrance on eternal life, but if it was so meant, we may safely conclude in the light of other utterances of Jesus that it misrepresents our Lord's teaching.

The teaching of St. Paul is on a somewhat different level. Although the apostle makes it clear that marriage is legitimate and that entrance on it is a question for the individual conscience (1 Cor. ix. 5), he does not conceal his personal opinion in favour of the unmarried state (1 Cor. vii. 7). In certain circumstances he counsels marriage; this, however, not as allowing that it is a relationship good in itself, but as a concession to human weakness (1 Cor. vii. 9). This seems low ground to take, and implies on the face of it a serious depreciation of the married state. Two considerations, however, have to be kept in view if we are to understand St. Paul's attitude and to appreciate justly the value of his advice with regard to marriage. We must remember, in the first place, that he was dealing with a definite moral situation which inevitably influenced his view of the character of the sexual relationship. We have only to call to mind the picture which he draws in Rom. i. 24 ff. of the abysmal depths of sensuality in the pagan world to realize that the condition of things in a city so notoriously licentious as Corinth would fill him with such disgust as to cause a natural reaction in favour of a life of sexual continence. But secondly, and this is of far greater importance in enabling us to understand St. Paul's position, the Second Coming of our Lord with all the terrors of a world-catastrophe was believed to be so imminent, that it is not surprising that the apostle desired his converts to refrain from a condition of life which would have

no meaning in the new age about to dawn, and to be entirely free from cares and responsibilities which might interfere with their devotion to Christ (1 Cor. vii. 29 ff.). "We never do justice (to use Burkitt's words) to the theory and practice of the first two generations of Christians, if we forget even for an instant that there brooded over them the shadow of the anticipated End of all things."¹⁹² When we make allowance for all this, the horror of pagan uncleanness and the awe of the expected sudden inbreaking of the powers of the new age, we are justified in holding that St. Paul's conception of marriage, shaped to suit exceptional conditions, was not, as is so often stated, very sensibly lower than Christ's.¹⁹³ He certainly maintained its sanctity as a relationship which Christians must not dissolve (1 Cor. vii. 10). Nevertheless the fact remains that in the special circumstances in which he wrote he exalted the celibate life and gave an impulse to a movement which in the end claimed for it unconditional superiority (cf. Rev. xiv. 4).

With St. Paul's teaching in mind, we may subscribe to the judgment of Koch¹⁹⁴ that "the high esteem of virginity as such sprang from Biblical thoughts and motives" and was not an intrusion from non-Christian sources. One is not surprised that, when abstinence from marriage was thus regarded as a condition of Christian perfection, there were those within the Church who went a step farther and pronounced marriage unlawful. We have evidence of this in 1 Tim. iv. 3, which strongly condemns those who forbid to marry. Dualistic views which dominated the thought of the age, with their sharp distinction between the spirit as good and the flesh as evil, undoubtedly contributed to the growth of this extreme opinion. But other influences were at work. Chief among these, perhaps, was a narrow legalistic conception of Christian morality which emphasized the imitation of Christ in every possible particular as obligatory on Christians. The genuinely Christian opposition

to different grades of obligation wrought in the same direction. If abstinence was the life of perfection, it was the duty of all to abstain. And with all this there was the natural revulsion from the gross sensualism of pagan society which led to the other extreme. Thus within the Church of the second century there were men and women who chose a life of sexual continence, not simply because it was considered more meritorious than marriage, but because it was regarded as a Christian duty, and the sure means of attaining to everlasting life. This, no doubt, was a common Gnostic view, but it was not confined to Gnostics. From the very austerity of its demand on human nature, it can never have been very widely accepted,¹⁹⁵ but that it had an attraction for not a few is shown by the vigour with which it was combated by Clement of Alexandria, who himself held virginity in high esteem.¹⁹⁶ The clearest evidence, however, that extreme encratite views were not peculiar to Gnostic sects, is afforded by the Acts of Paul, which was written by a presbyter in Asia, and directed as a polemic against Gnostic doctrine.

In their view of the person of Christ the Leucian Acts exhibit a naive *Modalism*—a type of doctrine which in its developed form obliterated all distinctions between the Father and the Son, and from its emphasis on the unity of the Divine Being shared with another form of thought somewhat similar the description of *Monarchian*. A doctrine of this kind from its apparent simplicity naturally appealed to those who were more conscious of the supreme religious value which they found in Christ than capable of explaining in any satisfactory way the relation between the Father and the Son. But, although in the Leucian Acts the distinction between the Father and the Son tends to disappear, and both are occasionally conceived as *modes* of the one God, there is no rigidity of view—a fact which points to the origin of the Acts at a time when theology was

popular and unreflective. In this respect, however, an exception must be made in the case of the Acts of John, where we find strong and well-defined Monarchian views. But in the main, the Christology has no sharp outlines; in the same writing, at one time we come on expressions which distinguish between the Father and the Son, and at another Christ is God *simpliciter*. Prayer is regularly addressed to Him as God with varying forms of invocation: "O God Jesus Christ," "O Lord God," "Christ Jesus, Lord God," "God of the æons, Jesus Christ," or more simply "Jesus," "O Christ," "O God." Many of these expressions are taken from the Acts of John which is rich in prayers, some of them of singular beauty, and in which, as has been said, the Christology has a distinctly Monarchian character. The following example may be given of the manner in which Jesus is addressed as the Divine Creator and Governor of all things: "O God, who hast chosen us for apostleship among the Gentiles, who hast sent us into the world, who hast declared Thyself through the Law and the Prophets, who hast never rested but always savest from the foundation of the world those who can be saved, who hast made Thyself known through all nature, even among the animals, who hast made the lonely and wild soul quiet and peaceable, who hast given Thyself to it when it thirsted after Thy words, who hast quickly shown Thyself to it when it was about to die, who hast appeared as law when it was sinking in lawlessness, who hast made Thyself known to it when it was overcome by Satan, who hast conquered its adversary when it sought refuge in Thee, who hast stretched out Thy hand to raise it from the kingdom of Hades, who hast not suffered it to remain in the body, who hast shown it its own enemy, who hast given it a pure knowledge concerning Thee, God Jesus, Father of the supersensible, Ruler of the heavenly, Law of things ethereal, and Path of things in the air, Guardian of the earthly and Terror of that which is

beneath the earth, Grace for those who belong to Thee, receive also the soul of Thy John, since doubtless it is found worthy of Thee" (*Acts of John*, 112).

In circles where Christ was so conceived, the door was open for *docetic misconceptions* of the nature and life of Jesus. Docetism, the type of doctrine which regarded the humanity of our Lord as phantasmal and unreal, has commonly been regarded as a product of Gnostic dualism, but in point of fact it had another root in catholic circles, where modalistic doctrine was dominant.¹⁹⁷ As Dr. Hugh Mackintosh has said: "The equilibrium of the doctrine was peculiarly unstable. In Praxeas' hands it came very near to Docetism. He recognized no human soul in Jesus, and the flesh which with him did duty for complete human nature can hardly have been more than a bare selfless vesture of the indwelling God."¹⁹⁸ This tendency of a modalistic Christology towards Docetism is intelligible. When the divinity of Jesus is stressed in such a way that no distinction between the Father and the Son is recognized, the inevitable consequence is that His humanity fades into the background and becomes shadowy and unreal. Popular orthodoxy in every age proves the truth of this. Thus it may be regarded as certain that the docetic tendencies, which appeared in the Church by the end of the first century and were probably in existence much earlier, were due not to influences from without, or not to them entirely, but to the strength of the conviction held by Christian people that the Lord whom they worshipped was a heavenly Being raised far above all human limitations. This conviction with regard to the exalted Christ reacted on their conception of His earthly life. This is apparent in the Fourth Gospel, which in spite of its emphatic affirmation of the reality of the Incarnation, "bears a semi-docetic character."¹⁹⁹ The human lineaments of Jesus are partially hidden in the glory of the divine majesty

which faith apprehended in the living Lord. It was natural, of course, that the Gnostics should be Docetes, and in general they were, although some got round the difficulty, to them insuperable, of a divine-human Christ in another way; but it is plain from the Fourth Gospel, and still more (as we shall see) from Clement of Alexandria who repudiated their philosophy, that it was not from them that the obscuration of the true and full humanity of Jesus, so common in the Church, had its origin. This must be borne in mind when we consider the *provenance* of the docetic views which meet us in the apocryphal Acts. In the Acts of John they are very marked; they are faint in the Acts of Peter, and altogether absent in the Acts of Paul.

There are other elements in the Leucian Acts which betray their affinity with Gnostic teaching, such as the abstruse doctrine of the Cross in the Acts of John, Andrew, and Peter; the constitution of the heavenly spheres and the idea of a secret revelation, superior to that given in the written Gospels, in the Acts of John; and the doctrine of the soul in the famous hymn in the Acts of Thomas. These must be reserved for later treatment. But when they are examined, they will not, I believe, invalidate the conclusion to which the discussion so far has been pointing, that much more stringent evidence would be required to prove the truth of the view that the apocryphal Acts are a product of Gnostic schools meant for propaganda in the Church. A fuller knowledge of the Acts of Paul than was possible when Lipsius wrote has rendered the theory of its origin in Gnostic circles quite untenable; and as for the others, an endeavour will be made to substantiate the opinion, expressed in too extreme a fashion by Schmidt, that they arose within the Church. It is certainly going too far to say that they were catholic writings, in the sense that they would have been acceptable in every Christian com-

munity. Hospitable as the Church of the second century was to many ideas which streamed in upon her from diverse quarters, and tolerant as she was, at a time when doctrine was fluid, of views which later were condemned as heretical, one cannot but believe that some of the doctrines taught, for example, in the Acts of John would have been regarded in many Church circles with suspicion and distrust and even with abhorrence. But, on the other hand, there is nothing to forbid the assumption that there were minds within the Church which would have found no heresy in them. Even those which seem to be most thoroughly imbued with the Gnostic spirit have points of connexion with views held by representative teachers of the Church like Justin, Irenæus, and Clement of Alexandria. The Church of the second century was far from being a homogeneous unity in the matter of doctrine, and Christian communities must have differed widely then as they differ now. In these circumstances the apocryphal Acts take their place quite naturally as popular writings produced for the edification and instruction of Christian people by authors who, in their conception of Christian conduct and in their treatment of Christian facts, were influenced more or less deeply by prevalent modes of Hellenistic thought. That they were written by Gnostics for the purpose of propagating their views in orthodox circles there is nothing to show.

One thing more may be added in this introductory chapter. Many passages in the Leucian Acts reveal a great warmth and sincerity of religious feeling, while their moral earnestness is unmistakable. Running through them there is a deep and passionate conviction of the abiding presence of Christ and of His sufficiency for all human need. If there is a pronounced pessimistic strain in the views which the writers entertain with reference to worldly joys and activities, there is nothing depressing in their general outlook, but rather a grave and subdued

enthusiasm, as they turn their thoughts to Christ the Unconquerable. The writers had a profound sense of the presence of evil in the world and of dread powers from which they desired deliverance, but they had also a serene and invincible assurance, rooted in the great invisible realities, that every opposing might must yield to the power of Jesus Christ. We often feel that these Acts with their absurdities are sorry reading, and then we light on passages which have the authentic note of Christian feeling and confidence. An extravagant delight in the marvellous, an austere and unworldly ethic, an imperfect and sometimes fantastic theology, cannot hide the intensity of faith in the adequacy of Christ to satisfy the yearnings of the soul and to bring it deliverance from the dark powers of evil. As expressing this confidence we give one of the prayers taken from the Acts of John. "Jesus, who didst wreath this crown by Thy twining, who hast inserted these many flowers into the everlasting flower of Thy countenance, who hast sown these words into my soul, who art the only Fosterer and Physician of Thy servants, who healest freely, who art benignant and not haughty, alone merciful and kind, alone a Saviour and just, Thou who always seest what happens to all and art in all and everywhere present, comprising all and replenishing all, Christ Jesus, God, Lord, who with Thy gifts and Thy compassion dost protect those that hope in Thee, who knowest intimately all the stratagems and threats with which our adversary follows us everywhere, do Thou, O Lord, help Thy servants with Thy watchful care" (ch. 108).

CHAPTER VII.

THE ACTS OF JOHN.

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the Leucian Acts have several broad features in common. They are all alike pervaded by an atmosphere of the supernatural, and reflect the popular taste for marvels of the most extravagant kind ; their ethic is severely ascetic, culminating in the demand for abstinence from marriage as a condition of Christian discipleship ; and in their conception of the person of Christ they meet on the basis of a Christology of the modalistic type. But with all these similarities which produce a general uniformity of tone, there are striking differences which not only put the idea of a common authorship out of the question, but make it clear that the writers had not identical theological interests and sympathies. It has already been sufficiently emphasized that doctrinally the Acts of Paul occupies a place by itself, inasmuch as it is not only free from conceptions which suggest Gnostic influence, but is in its aim quite definitely anti-Gnostic. The Acts of Thomas, too, stands apart from the others ; for although it exhibits the same naïve delight in miracle and the same unworldly and encratite type of Christian morality and indeed shows clear signs of dependence on earlier Acts,²⁰⁰ it reflects the spirit and aspirations of the Syrian Church in which it had its origin ; whereas the others, with the exception of the Acts of Peter, which in all probability was written in Rome, had their home on the soil of Asia Minor.

We do not propose to discuss the Acts of Andrew and of Peter. Both of these show affinities with the more important Acts of John, and in the case of the former the possibility is not to be excluded that it comes from the same hand. Apart from similarities in thought and language, this is supported by slight external evidence. What has been preserved of the Acts of Andrew is composed largely of addresses by the apostle, couched in a style that is impassioned and highly rhetorical (the words come from his mouth "like a stream of fire"; ch. 12), denouncing the works and character of Satan and calling for chastity and abstinence from all earthly joys. There is also a passage (ch. 19), similar to one in the Acts of John, in which the apostle discourses on the "mystery" of the Cross. The Acts of Peter, which is chiefly concerned with narrating the conflict between the apostle and Simon Magus at Rome and the apostle's martyrdom under Nero, betrays the influence of the Acts of John in its doctrine of the Cross (ch. 37); but its teaching on the whole has a catholic character, and in particular it appears to make allusions to the Roman Symbol. There are, however, docetic tones ("He ate and drank on our account, though He was neither hungry nor thirsty," ch. 20), but these are not inconsistent with good catholic doctrine at the time (see Clement of Alexandria's words, *infra*, p. 225). More clearly perhaps than any other of the Leucian Acts the Petrine romance reveals the prevalent conviction of the second century, that the spread of the Gospel had been mainly due to signs and wonders wrought by the apostles. The narrative of St. Peter's activity at Rome has no historical value, but it is interesting to note that the source of the well-known 'Quo Vadis?' story is to be found in these Acts. The story is given as follows: "As they took counsel together, Xanthippe heard of the advice which her husband had given to Agrippa (about putting Peter to death), and she sent word to Peter and besought

him to leave Rome. And the other brethren along with Marcellus also urged him to leave the city. But Peter said to them, Shall we run away, brethren? And they said to him, No, but your duty is to go away, as you can still serve the Lord. He gave heed to the brethren and went away alone, saying, Let none of you go with me; I will go alone when I have changed my garment. When he came to the gate, he saw the Lord about to enter Rome. And seeing Him, he said, Lord, *whither goest Thou* in this wise? And the Lord said to him, I go to Rome to be crucified. And Peter said to Him, Lord, wilt Thou be crucified again? He said to him, Yes, Peter, I shall be crucified again. Then Peter came to himself and saw the Lord depart to heaven; he returned to Rome, rejoicing and praising the Lord, because He Himself had said, I shall be crucified. That was to be fulfilled in Peter" (ch. 35).

The Acts of John, which we are now to consider, is the earliest of the apocryphal Acts. It was written, not long after the middle of the second century, by one who professed to be an eye-witness of the events which he narrated. This device in the use of the first person, which may possibly have been suggested by the "we" passages in the canonical Acts, was not infrequent in writings which claimed apostolic sanction; examples are to be found in the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of the Ebionites, and the *Epistola Apostolorum*. It is highly probable that the author of the Acts of John mentioned himself in his book as Leucius, a disciple and companion of the apostle. Whoever he was, he was a man of very considerable literary gifts and of deep religious feeling, with an interest in mystical speculations characteristic of the Hellenistic thought of the time. Where the book was written we have no means of knowing; Ephesus, which is given as the chief scene of the apostle's labours,²⁰¹ has been suggested, although the story of the fall of the temple of Artemis (ch. 42) makes that improbable;

but in any case the Acts belongs naturally to an environment in which the influence of Johannine thought was paramount. How quickly and how far its circulation extended is also unknown; the first probable reference to it is dated at the beginning of the third century, when Clement of Alexandria, without mentioning the Acts by name, speaks of a story found by him "in the traditions" which is generally considered to have been drawn from the Acts of John (*vid. infra*, p. 224 f.). Somewhat later, in the Monarchian Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (c. 215 ?), details are given about St. John's celibate life and self-burial which are derived from the Acts. If its use in both these cases may be assumed, as it fairly may, we have evidence that in the two generations following its appearance Church writers as far apart as Rome and Alexandria were acquainted with it. While it is worthy of note that they do not betray any consciousness that they are dealing with material taken from a tainted or suspicious writing, that does not warrant us in drawing large conclusions as to the favour with which the Acts of John was regarded by the Church. We are not entitled to infer that because it was used by Clement and the author of the Monarchian Prologues it was held in general esteem as a catholic work; for, on the one hand, Clement in his characteristically eclectic manner accepted and quoted without disapproval passages derived from theological quarters the most diverse just as it suited him, and on the other, the Monarchian Christology of the Acts would naturally incline the author of the Prologues to regard the book with favour, even although there were elements in it which were otherwise unacceptable to him.

In its complete form, as we gather from the Stichometry of Nicephorus, the Acts of John was about the length of St. Matthew's Gospel. About two-thirds of the book has been preserved, the opening part being lost as well as a section

which apparently dealt with a missionary tour of the apostle among the Churches of Asia. The existing narrative records incidents of St. John's ministry at Ephesus, with the mention of a visit to Smyrna, and these form a sequence of marvellous deeds (among which are frequent raisings from the dead), interspersed with addressés and prayers. As an example of Leucius' narrative, showing how preaching and miracle are blended, we may take the incident of the appearance of the apostle at the temple of Artemis on the feast-day of the goddess (chs. 38 ff.). Clothed in garments of mourning, St. John mounted a platform and addressed the gay throng of worshippers on the sin of idolatry. "Men of Ephesus, ye are in danger of partaking of the character of the sea. Every river as it discharges its waters, and every stream as it dashes down, showers of rain and chasing billows and torrents that gush from the rock, all are impregnated with the bitter salt that is in the sea. Thus even now ye remain unchangeably hostile to true piety and slowly perish in your ancient worship of idols. How many wonderful deeds have ye seen me perform, how many works of healing! And yet ye are still hardened in heart and are unable to look up. What now, men of Ephesus? I have ventured to come to your idol's temple to convince you that ye are wholly without God and dead through human imaginings. Behold, I stand here. You all declare that Artemis is mighty. Pray to her that I alone die. Or if this be beyond your power, I alone will call upon my God to destroy you all because of your unbelief." On hearing this the multitude cried for mercy; whereupon the apostle prayed: "God, who art God above all so-called gods, who even until now hast been despised in Ephesus, . . . may the deity of this place which has deceived so many yield to Thy name, and so do Thou show Thy mercy on this place. For they wander in error." When St. John had finished praying, the altar of Artemis was immediately

broken in pieces and half of the temple fell, killing the priest on the spot. The sequel was the instant conversion of many, who cried : “ There is only one God, the God of John, only one God who has mercy upon us. For Thou alone art God ; now are we converted unto Thee, since we have seen Thy marvellous works. Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Thy will, and deliver us from the great error of our ways.” In this episode, with its obvious allusion to Elijah’s contest with the priests of Baal, we have the characteristic apologetic of the apocryphal Acts ; Christianity is shown to be the true religion by the miraculous power exercised by the apostles. Miracle is the chief instrument of conversion.

A somewhat whimsical story, which, however, cannot be said with certainty to have belonged to the Leucian Acts of John, is told to illustrate the apostle’s supernatural insight and his power of bringing conviction to one whose soul was concerned with mean things. It runs as follows : “ One day as John was sitting there, a partridge flew through the air and ran in the sand before him. John looked at it in astonishment. There came a priest, one of his hearers, and approached John, and when he saw the partridge running before him he was scandalized and said within himself, ‘ A man so notable and so old takes pleasure in a partridge running in the sand ! ’ But John perceived his thoughts and said to him, ‘ It would be better, my son, if you too would look at a partridge running in the sand and not pollute yourself with disgraceful and impure deeds. For this cause He who waits for the conversion and repentance of all has brought you here. For I have no need of a partridge running in the sand. The partridge is your soul.’ When the old man heard this and realized that he did not remain hidden, but that the apostle of Christ had uttered everything which stirred his heart, he fell on his face to the ground and cried, ‘ Now, I know that God dwells in thee, blessed John. And

blessed be he who has not tempted God in thee ! For he that tempts thee tempts Him who cannot be tempted.' And he asked him to pray for him. And the apostle instructed him and gave him counsel and sent him to his home, praising the Almighty God " (chs. 56 f.).

Although the narrative portion of the Acts is by no means exhilarating reading and occasionally is revolting beyond description, we may give another instance of the kind of tale which " Leucius " told of the apostle and of the way in which he improved the occasion by his moral reflexions. The story has an historical interest because of the use which was made of it, as Photius noted, in the Iconoclastic Controversy in the eighth century. Lycomedes, described as " the commander-in-chief of the Ephesians," who had been converted through being raised from the dead, secretly commissioned an artist to paint a picture of John that he might have it before him in his private devotions. The apostle, wondering at the frequent absence of Lycomedes, entered the room and saw the picture but did not recognize it as one of himself until a mirror was brought to him. Even then he was by no means interested ; it was only the image of his body which he despised. Turning to Lycomedes, he spoke as follows : " Be thou, Lycomedes, I pray thee, a good painter. Thou possessest colours given thee through me by Jesus, who paints us all for Himself, who understands the shape and form and gesture and disposition and image of our souls. And the colours which I charge thee to lay on are these : faith in God, knowledge, godly fear, love, fellowship, meekness, kindness, brotherly affection, chastity, integrity, firmness, intrepidity, freedom from care, honour, and the whole chorus of colours which represents thy soul in the picture. . . . If all such colours are combined and mixed in thy soul, they will make it unafraid, hopeful and stedfast, and lead it to our Lord Jesus Christ. This, however, which thou

hast made is childish and imperfect ; thou hast painted a dead picture of a thing dead " (chs. 26 ff.). This episode from the Acts of John was much favoured by the Iconoclasts, who brought it forward at the Synod of Constantinople in 754 to support their case against image-worship. It should be remarked in passing that although the Leucian Acts had been put under the ban by the ecclesiastical authorities three hundred years before, they were still being read with so little respect for official condemnation that they could be quoted in a great controversy. When the question of images was brought up for decision at the Second Council of Nicæa in 787, the Fathers were led to investigate the character of the alleged apostolic testimony against image-worship, with the result that the Acts of John was described as "this abominable book," and on it the sentence was passed : "Let no one cite it ; and not only so, but we judge it worthy of being committed to the flames."²⁰² That there was justification for the strong language used by the Council, apart from the objectionable doctrines contained in the Acts, every one will readily admit who reads the longest episode in the book--the inexpressibly disgusting story of Drusiana.

And yet this book, which shows how little horror there was in some Christian circles at the mention of abominable deeds, has passages in it which breathe the fine spirit of genuine piety, and exhibit the marks of true poetic feeling. "Some of the mystical passages (as Kirsopp Lake says) reach a magnificent level and may be ranked with the best products of second-century religion."²⁰³ The following extract dealing with the compassion and universal presence of Christ is from the longest and most notable address in the book. "Since we have beheld, brethren, the grace of the Lord and His love towards us, let us worship Him as those to whom He has shown mercy, not, however, with hand or lips or tongue nor with any bodily organ

whatsoever, but with the dispositions of our soul—even Him who became man apart from this body. And let us watch, because even now He keepeth ward over prisons for our sake, in tombs also, in bonds and dungeons, in shame and mishandlings, by sea and on land, at scourgings, condemnations, conspiracies, and punishments. In a word, He is with all of us, and when we suffer, brethren, He also suffers with us. When any of us calls on Him, He cannot bear to close His ears against us, but since He is everywhere, He hearkens to us all . . . bringing help to us by His compassion. Wherefore, my beloved, be persuaded that I do not call you to worship a man, but God the Unchangeable, the Unconquerable, God who is higher than all authority and all power, who is more ancient and mightier than all angels and creations that are named and all æons. Abide, therefore, in Him and build on Him ; so will you possess your soul indestructible ” (chs. 103. 104). In this passage there are indications of the characteristic theology of the Acts (Monarchian and Docetic), but the sincerity of the religious feeling is unmistakable. We hear the exulting tones of the conviction, *Quis nos separabit ?* Clearly the writer was speaking out of the heart of an experience in which Christ had been found to be the stay of men sorely beset and suffering for their faith. If he was not actually living in days of persecution, these were so recent that the memory deeply moved him—the memory of their awful cruelty and of the consolation and support which were given by the sure presence of Christ. Polycarp was martyred in Smyrna in 155, and the Acts of John was written not many years later.

The same note of reality is heard in the discourse delivered by the apostle against worldliness. Take a few sentences from it. “ Men of Ephesus, . . . I have not been sent with a human message, nor have I gone into a distant land with a hopeless commission. I am no merchant, buying or exchanging

goods, but He whom I preach, even Jesus Christ, will through me in His mercy and kindness wholly convert you and will deliver you from your errors—you who have suffered unbelief to have dominion over you and have sold yourselves to shameful lusts. . . . One thing, to begin with, I would implant in your ears, since concern for your souls has brought me here, that ye imagine not that this present time, which is in truth a time of bondage, will last to all eternity, and that ye ‘lay not up treasures on earth’ where everything passes away. . . . Thou who in thy physical beauty liftest up thy countenance with proud assurance, thou wilt at any rate see the end of the promise when thou comest to the grave. . . . Thou hast thy pleasure in gold and ivory, and precious stones delight thee, but wilt thou behold that which thou lovest when the night has fallen? Thou art taken up with soft apparel, but when thou hast said farewell to this life, will it be of any use to thee in the place whither thou goest?” (chs. 33 ff.). Here again we must remember the background of a time of persecution, when the present world, never thought of by second-century Christians as anything but a place of sojourning, was more than ever a house of bondage, and the outlook was to things eternal and abiding. The universal feeling in the early Church that worldly things were *ἀλλότρια* (2 Clem. 5), foreign things with which Christians had no real concern, was naturally deepened when any day the lions or the stake was a terrible possibility.²⁰⁴ It was, no doubt, a narrow conception, and its inevitable consequence was a negative and ascetic attitude to the world and all its interests; but, as Harnack has pointed out,²⁰⁵ in an age so predominantly secular and grossly sensual as the second century, the utter unworldliness of Christians was the strength of the Church, and a passage such as that which has been quoted enables us to realize with what earnestness and passionate conviction it was preached.

In passing to consider in detail the thought of the Acts of John we need say nothing further about the spirit of complete detachment from the world which pervades the book. An opportunity for tracing the effect of this spirit on the Christian ethic of the period will be found when we discuss the Acts of Thomas, the interest of which is only remotely theological, and is almost entirely centred in the life of chastity and voluntary poverty. Nor need we linger over the presentation of the ideal of virginity which is not so prominent in the Acts of John as in some of the others; it is sufficient to say that nowhere is it made clearer than in the Johannine romance that the perverted sexual instinct, revealed in the contempt of marriage, inevitably leads to an unhealthy curiosity and loss of delicacy, and to the sully of that purity of spirit which the exaltation of virginity as the life of Christian perfection was meant to preserve. There is one question, however, in this connexion which should be referred to, the question, namely, whether the rigorous asceticism of the Acts of John springs from a dualistic view of things. There are certainly expressions which point in this direction, and there will be no disposition to dissent from the opinion of James,²⁰⁶ that Leucius was "essentially a dualist." At the same time, this admission does not carry with it the implication that his thought was dominated by conceptions which were necessarily at variance with prevailing Christian views. It would, in fact, be difficult to find any Christian writer in primitive times who was not in a greater or less degree under the influence of dualistic conceptions. This was not due to metaphysical theory; it simply reflected the acute sense in Christian minds of the contradictions present in experience, the apparent moral confusion in the world, the manifest and mysterious differences in the character of men, and the inveterate tendencies to sin in the human heart. In view of this, it should be made clear that Leucius was no thoroughgoing dualist in

the sense that he believed that the material world was in its essence evil, or that the physical nature of man was from its very constitution the seat of sinful lusts, or that the universe was a divided realm governed by two antagonistic powers. Of a rigid dualism of this kind there is in the Acts of John no trace. Worldly things are disparaged, not because they are inherently evil, but because they are transient, and thus of incomparably lesser value than the things which are spiritual. That is clearly brought out in the discourse against worldliness already quoted. The same view is excellently expressed in the apostle's farewell prayer. When once one has known Christ, everything else becomes indifferent. "Thou hast set it in my soul to have no possession but Thee alone; for what can be more precious than Thou?" (ch. 113). This is an echo of the great words of Ps. lxxiii. 25: "If I have Thee, there is none else on earth whom I desire." Leucius certainly has phrases which seem to suggest that natural instincts are evil, as, for instance, when in the hour of death the apostle praises Christ because He had kept him from "the filthy madness of the flesh" (ch. 113); but that does not necessarily imply that the flesh is regarded as in its nature sinful. Another passage indeed (ch. 54) is decisive against this, in which St. John condemns an act of self-mutilation as inspired by Satan and thereupon declares: "Thou shouldest not have destroyed thy members, but the temper which proved itself evil through the members. For not the instruments are harmful to man, but the hidden sources by which every shameful inclination is called forth and becomes manifest." That makes it plain that in Leucius' view evil is not inherent in the physical nature of man, but arises from the consent of the will to temptation by the devil, who in harmony with catholic doctrine is regarded as the arch-deceiver and supernatural enemy of the good, from whose power Christ is come to deliver men. "Vanish away (says the apostle)

from those who hope in the Lord, from their thoughts, from their minds, from their souls, from their bodies. . . . From all these, thou most unholy and abominable Satan, Jesus Christ, our God and the [Lord] of those who are like thee and have thy nature, will keep thee away" (ch. 84). It is noteworthy that in arguing against the Manichæan doctrine, Augustine quotes from the "Acts written by Leucius" a passage which declares that falsehoods and other sins "do not proceed from one's own nature, but from the man who of his own will has been degraded by seduction."²⁰⁷

It has already been pointed out that the Christology of the Leucian Acts in general is modalistic, and this appears, most clearly defined, in the Acts of John. The Father and the Son are modes of the one God. Christ is never named "the Son of God," nor does the expression occur, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Monarchian conception is set forth in a pronounced form. Christ is the supreme God, "the Lord of the universe" (ch. 22), "God of the æons" (ch. 82) who holds all powers in subjection. He is God alone, wielding a might against which all opposition is vain (ch. 77). He is the Saviour from all eternity, who has revealed Himself in all nature and in the lower creation (ch. 112). He is the subject of the Divine predicates in all their fulness; He is clothed with the attributes of absolute existence. He is God unchangeable, invincible, incomprehensible, ineffable, the root of immortality and the source of incorruption, the Father of those who are above the heavens, the Guardian of those on the earth, and the Terror of those who are under the earth (chs. 79. 104. 109. 112). It is mainly in the prayers of the apostle that these and many other epithets of absolute Divinity occur; the language of adoration sought in vain to utter the unsearchable fulness of the glory that was felt to be in Christ. "Thou who alone art God, I call upon Thee,

the immeasurably Great, the Ineffable, the Incomprehensible, to whom every lordly power is subject, before whom every rule bows and all pride falls down in silence, at whose voice the demons are filled with terror, in the contemplation of whom the whole creation gives itself to reverent worship" (ch. 79). "Let not our good God be grieved, the Gracious, the Merciful, the Holy, the Pure, the Stainless, the Incorporeal, the Alone, the One, the Immutable, the Sincere, the Guileless, the Slow to anger, who is high and lifted up above every name that is named or thought by us, our God Jesus Christ" (ch. 107). It is not, perhaps, surprising that language of this kind gave offence in later days when theology had become definitely Trinitarian; Photius charged Leucius with "jumbling and confusing everything and calling Christ now Father, now Son." But in the second century there was no clear perception of the distinctions in the Godhead; Monarchianism was, in fact, the prevalent Christology in Asia Minor, and even in Rome until the time of Callistus (c. 220) it was the official doctrine.²⁰⁸

In view of the fact, already referred to, that Monarchian views tend strongly towards Docetism, we are not surprised to find that the Acts of John shows very pronounced docetic features. This will best be made clear by giving a few extracts from that section of the book in which the author rewrites several of the main incidents in the life of Jesus, putting the narrative into the mouth of the apostle. Running through the whole is a representation of the body of Jesus, not as merely phantasmal, but as possessing a character altogether different from the ordinary human body, in virtue of which it was capable of assuming different forms, and was at one time recognized as material, at another time as immaterial, such a character, in fact, as the post-resurrection body of Jesus is represented as having in the canonical Gospels.

“ When He had chosen Peter and Andrew, who were brothers, He came to me and to my brother James and said : I have need of you, come to Me ! And my brother spoke as follows : John, what does he want, that boy who called to us from the shore ? And I said : What boy ? He answered : He that is beckoning to us. And I replied : My brother James, on account of our many watches by night on the sea, your eyes deceive you, for do you not see that he who stands there is a handsome, comely, bright-looking man ? But he said to me : I do not see him, brother ; but let us go ashore, and we shall learn what this means. And when we had brought our boat to land, we saw Him helping us to make fast. But when we left the place to follow Him, He appeared to me again rather bald but with a thick, flowing beard, but to James He appeared as a youth whose beard was newly come. Both of us consequently were perplexed as to what that which we had seen might mean. . . . But to me something still more wonderful appeared ; I endeavoured to see Him in private, and I never at any time saw His eyes closing but only open. Often He appeared to me as a small, uncomely person, and then again as one reaching to heaven. There was about Him this other marvellous thing ; when I lay at table, He took me to His breast and I embraced Him, and sometimes His breast felt smooth and soft, and sometimes as hard as stone, so that I was bewildered and said, What can this mean ? (chs. 88. 89). . . . Of another glory I will tell you, brethren. Sometimes when I would take hold of Him, I found a material and solid body, and at other times when I touched Him, the substance was immaterial and incorporeal and as if it were nothing at all. . . . And often when I was walking with Him, I wished to see whether the print of His foot appeared on the earth for I saw Him raising Himself from the earth and I never saw it ” (ch. 93).²⁰⁹ As will

appear later when we consider Leucius' doctrine of the Cross, the sufferings of Christ were also conceived in a docetic way; "the Lord contrived all things symbolically and by a dispensation for the converting and saving of men" (ch. 102).

The Gnostic affinities of these representations are undeniable. Adherents of Gnostic schools had different views of the nature of the body of Jesus, but they were at one in their refusal to allow His true and full humanity. Marcion, the most thoroughgoing of all Docetes, denied that Jesus had any real contact with the physical world at all; He was a purely heavenly being who suddenly appeared on earth, and what seemed to be a body of flesh and blood was a mere shade or phantasm. Apelles, one of Marcion's followers, although holding views not so completely docetic as his master, declared that the body of Christ was borrowed "from the stars and from the substances of the upper world" (*de sideribus et de substantiis superioris mundi mutuatus est carnem* (Christus), Tertullian, *de carne Christi*, 6). Others, among them Valentinus, did not question the reality of Christ's body, but held that it was of a peculiar character (*propriæ qualitatis*, Tertullian, *de resurr. carnis*, 2), and Clement of Alexandria quotes Valentinus as saying that Jesus "ate and drank in a unique way without digesting His food" (*Strom.* iii. 7. 59). The view represented in the Acts of John seems to approximate most nearly to that of Valentinus, and on this as well as on other grounds the author has been described as a Valentinian. Certainly the influence of that type of thought cannot be denied, but the acknowledgment of this should not be pressed so far as to regard it as a proof that the Johannine Acts was a product of the Valentinian school. It should steadily be borne in mind that ideas which are commonly associated with Gnostic systems were not excluded from the orthodox thought of the age; "they belonged" (as

Dr. E. F. Scott has said), "not to one peculiar drift of thought, but to the whole atmosphere in which all the thinkers lived and moved." ²¹⁰ In particular, from very early days, certainly from the end of the first century, docetic misconceptions were widespread within the Church, as is clearly shown by the writings of those who were alive to the danger of them. Docetism was the earliest heresy about Christ and the most natural, for the very intensity with which Christians believed in the Divinity of our Lord made it easy for them to minimize His true humanity. That was all the more natural in the case of those brought up in the intellectual atmosphere of Asia Minor. It was in that region that Docetism had its stronghold. The writer of the Fourth Gospel and of 1 John had it in view. Ignatius in his letters to some of the Asian Churches energetically opposed it, and felt it necessary to state with reiterated emphasis that Jesus was *truly* born and *truly* ate and drank, that He was *truly* crucified and *truly* raised from the dead. "If He suffered only in appearance (he said), . . . why am I in bonds? And why do I also desire to fight with wild beasts?" (*Trall.* 10; cf. *Smyrn.* 2. 4. 5). It was not for a shadow-Christ that Ignatius was facing the prospect of martyrdom, and the note of passion in his words makes it clear that the danger threatening the Church early in the second century from the prevalence of docetic views was a very real one. This being so, there is no need to seek an origin in heretical circles outside the Church for a writing even so markedly docetic as the Acts of John. Its extreme views may not have been widely accepted, but they had an attraction for minds which would have repudiated the Gnostic position. Clement of Alexandria was no Docete—at least he would have disclaimed the name—and yet he quoted, apparently with approval, a passage which he found "in the traditions" (an almost certain allusion to the Acts of John) to the effect that when the apostle sought

to touch the body of Christ, his hand met with no resistance, but went right into it.²¹¹ Further, stating his own belief, Clement says (*Strom.* vi. 9. 71): "In the case of the Saviour, it would be ludicrous to suppose that His body, *quâ* body, required the necessary attentions for its continuance. For He ate, not for the sake of His body which was sustained by a holy power, but that other thoughts about Him might not enter the minds of His companions, as indeed afterwards some supposed that He was manifested merely in appearance." It is also worthy of remark, with reference to the statements in the Acts that Jesus was seen in many different forms, that Origen believed that He did not always have the same appearance (cf. Mark xvi. 12), and gave that as the reason for the necessity of the traitor's kiss (*contra Celsum*, ii. 64). In view of all this, one is justified in hesitating to conclude from the evidence so far considered that the Acts of John is a Gnostic writing.

In harmony with the docetic representations set forth above is the doctrine of the Cross, which in the denial of the reality of Christ's earthly sufferings and in the cosmological character of its speculation once more betrays an affinity with Valentinian thought. The section of the Acts in which the doctrine is expounded contains the strange hymn used by the Priscillianists in Spain, and before proceeding farther a short account may be given of it. The writing of the hymn and its inclusion in the Acts were obviously suggested by the statement in the Gospels (Mark xiv. 26 ; Matt. xxvi. 30), that before Jesus and His followers went out from the upper room to the Mount of Olives they sang an hymn. According to the narrative of Leucius, it was sung by Jesus standing in the middle of a ring formed by the disciples, while all engaged in a solemn dance,²¹² the disciples responding with "Amen" at the close

of each separate utterance of Christ. The hymn runs as follows :

“Glory to Thee, Father! (and we going round in a circle said, Amen).
 Glory to Thee, Word! Glory to Thee, Grace! Amen.
 Glory to Thee, Spirit! Glory to Thee, Holy One! Glory to Thy
 Glory! Amen.

We praise Thee, O Father. We give thanks unto Thee,
 O Light wherein no darkness dwells. Amen.

Now for what we give thanks, I say :
 I will be saved, and I will save. Amen.
 I will be freed, and I will free. Amen.
 I will be pierced, and I will pierce. Amen.
 I will be begotten, and I will beget. Amen.
 I will eat, and I will be eaten. Amen.
 I will hear, and I will be heard. Amen.
 I will be understood, being wholly Understanding. Amen.
 I will be washed, and I will wash. Amen.

Grace leads the dance.

I will pipe, dance all of you. Amen.
 I will mourn, lament all of you. Amen.
 An Ogdoad sings praise with us. Amen.
 The Dodecad is dancing above. Amen.
 The Whole is free to dance above. Amen.
 He who dances not, knows not what is about to happen. Amen.

I will flee, and I will stay. Amen.
 I will adorn, and I will be adorned. Amen.
 I will be united, and I will unite. Amen.
 I have no house, and I have houses. Amen.
 I have no place, and I have places. Amen.
 I have no temple, and I have temples. Amen.
 I am a lamp to thee who seest Me. Amen.
 I am a mirror to thee who thinkest of Me. Amen.
 I am a door to thee who knockest at Me. Amen.
 I am a way to thee, thou wanderer. Amen.”²¹³

It is the general view that this hymn is distinctly a Gnostic product. “The key to the meaning (of the enigmatic words),” says Pfeiderer, “must be sought in the conception of the (Ophite) popular Gnosis, according to which the Sophia is, on

the one hand, enclosed in pneumatic souls as a divine kernel and needs to be delivered ; and, on the other hand, as the higher divine power, effects the deliverance.”²¹⁴ The reference to the Ogdoad and Dodecad is also regarded as pointing to the Gnostic origin of the hymn. But with respect to this Kirsopp Lake has very properly said : *Gnostic* is “a term which has wrought more confusion of thought in our time than the systems so described raised controversy in the days of the Fathers. . . . A belief in ogdoads and dodecads was not necessarily excluded from orthodox thought in the second century. Heresy in that happy period was found in opinions, not so much on the constitution of the divine sphere of influence in heaven, as on the relation between God and the world. To believe that heaven or even the fulness of the divine being was divided into three, seven, eight or twelve, was not important ; what was decisive was the question whether creation was due to the goodwill of a supreme God who called for the co-operation of His creatures, or to the incompetence of an inferior one, to escape from whose inadequacy was salvation and life.”²¹⁵ No argument, accordingly, as to the Gnostic character of the hymn can be based on the reference to the Ogdoad or Dodecad. But while this is granted, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the author was deeply influenced by modes of thought that were foreign to catholic sentiment. What he was endeavouring to express in the antitheses of his strange and fantastic hymn it is difficult with any clearness to conceive, but it may be near the truth to say that in his mind there was a hazy conception of the mystic unity of Christ and His disciples. Thus while one part of the sayings speaks of the saving activity contemplated by Christ, the other gives utterance through Jesus’ lips to the longing of the disciples for the experience of the divine salvation. “I will be saved, and I will save.” There are allusions to the new birth (“I will be begotten, and I will beget”), to baptism

(" I will be washed, and I will wash "). and to the Lord's Supper (" I will eat, and I will be eaten "). Augustine, to whom the hymn was sent by a bishop who spoke of it with admiration, made severe animadversions on it, and pointed out that even those truths which its admirers found in it were far more clearly and simply set forth in the canonical writings.

In the passage immediately following the hymn, as well as later in the description given of Christ's interview with John on the Mount of Olives during the Crucifixion, the sufferings of Christ are represented as a mere illusion. They were regarded as real by the ignorant multitude, but to the enlightened who understood the mystery they were only a symbol cunningly devised to teach men the true meaning of suffering. " Thou couldest in no wise understand what thou sufferest," Christ is represented as saying in the choric dance, " if I had not been sent to thee as the Logos from the Father. . . . If Thou shouldest know what suffering is, thou wouldest be saved from suffering " (ch. 96). It is a true thought that the real burden of suffering lies in the mystery of it, and that deliverance from its burden lies in understanding its meaning; but Leucius gives no indication how men can be enlightened as to its meaning through being taught by One who suffered only in appearance. This was the argument which Tertullian urged against Marcion : ²¹⁶ " Nothing substantial can be allowed to have been effected by an unsubstantial thing; . . . if the worker was imaginary, the works were imaginary." So Cyril of Jerusalem : " If the incarnation was an illusion, salvation also is an illusion." ²¹⁷ In any case the one thing which Leucius is concerned to make clear in his endeavour to get rid of the scandal of the Cross is that the sufferings of Christ were not what they were generally taken to be. " Thou hearest (from Me)," Christ says to the disciples, " that I suffered, and yet I suffered not ; that I suffered not and yet I did suffer ; that I was pierced and yet I was not smitten ;

. . . in a word, that I have not experienced what they say of me, but that I have suffered what they do not say " (ch. 101). So far as one can gather it, the view of Leucius was this, that the Cross brought no actual suffering to Christ inasmuch as it was a mere spectacle, a symbolic arrangement designed to give men a proper understanding of the nature of suffering and thus to set them free from it ; but that, on the other hand, the sufferings of Christ were real, inasmuch as He suffered when His followers suffered (ch. 103), and was grieved when they disobeyed His commandments (ch. 106).

The author of the Acts of John was not, however, content with denying the reality of Christ's sufferings on the Cross ; he felt under the necessity of giving some positive doctrine, setting forth what the Cross actually meant. It was not enough to say that it was a mere illusion, a dramatic representation to purge men from the effects of suffering. The prominence of the Cross in evangelic tradition demanded more than that, and not even those who were most strongly repelled by the thought of a suffering divine being could rest satisfied with mere negation. Accordingly we find in the Acts of John, as well as in the Acts of Andrew (ch. 19) and of Peter (chs. 37 ff.), a positive doctrine which attributed a cosmical significance to the Cross of Christ. The doctrine is expounded by our Lord Himself in a secret revelation given to the Apostle John, who on Christ's apprehension had taken refuge in a cave on the Mount of Olives. The Crucifixion had taken place and darkness covered the earth. Then Christ appeared to John. " My Lord stood in the midst of the cave and illumined it and said : ' John, unto the multitude down below in Jerusalem I am being crucified and pricked with lances and reeds, and vinegar and gall are given me to drink ; but unto thee I am speaking, and do thou hearken to what I say. I put it in thy heart to come to this mountain that thou mightest hear what a disciple must learn from his master and

a man from God.' And having thus spoken, He showed me a cross of light securely fixed and around the cross a great multitude. . . . And I beheld the Lord Himself upon the cross, and He had no form but only a voice strange to listen to, a voice sweet, kindly and truly divine, which said to me : ' One must hear this from Me, for I am in need of one to hear it. This cross of light I call for your sakes sometimes Logos, sometimes Understanding, sometimes Jesus, sometimes Christ, sometimes Door, sometimes Way, sometimes Bread, sometimes Seed, sometimes Resurrection, sometimes Son, sometimes Father, sometimes Spirit, sometimes Life, sometimes Truth, sometimes Faith, sometimes Grace. So it is called for men. But in reality, regarded in itself and according to our manner of speaking, it is that which fixes the limits of all things and the sure uplifting of that which from being unstable has been made steadfast. . . . It is the cross accordingly that has fixed all things securely by the Word and has set bounds to the kingdom of becoming and to that which is beneath and then has brought all things into a unity. It is not the cross which thou wilt see made of wood when thou goest down from here. Nor am I he who is on the cross—I whom thou seest not now but whose voice only thou hearest ' ' ' (chs. 97 ff.). That is the Leucian doctrine of the Cross, strange and bewildering enough to justify Photius in regarding it as a tissue of absurdities and empty words. What did Leucius mean by it? Quite clearly the doctrine attempts two things : to get rid of the offence of the Cross and at the same time to give it some great place in the universal scheme of things. As Bousset has pointed out, the key to the interpretation of Leucius' doctrine is found in the identification of Christ with the Platonic world-soul, which was conceived as the principle of being diffused everywhere throughout the universe.²¹⁸ This world-soul, as Plato says (*Timæus*, 36), was divided lengthwise into two parts which were joined together

at the centre (in the form of a cross) like the letter *Chi* (X)—the reference being to “the two great circles in heaven, the equator and the ecliptic, which cutting one another at the equinoctial points in fact form the great X in heaven.”²¹⁹ When cosmical significance came to be attached to Christ, as we find it in Col. i. 16 f., Heb. i. 3, and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, it was natural that those familiar with Greek philosophy should have identified Him with the all-pervasive soul of the world. And just as naturally the Cross of Christ came to be regarded as the appearance on earth of the great X of the world-soul in heaven. This may strike us as sheer mythological trifling with the supreme fact of Christian history, but it was the kind of speculation which appealed, not to Gnostics merely, but to orthodox ecclesiastical writers in the second century. Justin, who vigorously protested against the docetic view that Christ did not actually participate in the experiences that happened to Him (*Dial. c. Tryph.* 103), nevertheless made the double identification to which reference has been made (*Apol.* i. 60), and in particular Irenæus (*Epideixis*, ch. 34) has a passage which is intelligible only when we recognize that the Divine Word through whom all things were created was in his view the same as the Platonic *anima mundi*. The passage runs as follows: “He (who through the obedience of the Cross destroyed on the tree the old disobedience) is Himself the Word of Almighty God who permeates us all in the immediate present, and accordingly He embraces the whole world, its breadth and length, its height and depth; for through the Word of God were all things set in order, and *God’s Son is crucified in them, in that He is stamped on all in the form of a cross.*”²²⁰ It was right and fitting that with His own becoming visible He should stamp on everything visible His communion of the Cross with all, for His activity was bound to show, in visible things and in visible form, that He is the same that illumines the heights and reaches

down to the depths, even to the foundations of the earth, who spreads out the flat places from morning to evening and leads the wide places from north to south and calls together from every side to the knowledge of the Father all that is scattered." The similarity of this conception to Leucius' doctrine of the Cross of Light is in many respects very striking, and although Irenæus and Leucius are poles apart in their attitude to the facts of evangelic history, they are very near one another in the view that Jesus on the Cross is the earthly manifestation of the world-soul, the great Son of God who in the form of a cross illumines and sustains all things and brings them into a unity. What separates Leucius from Irenæus is his docetic treatment of the historical fact; both were imbued with the mysticism of Hellenistic philosophy, but while the one fell a prey to the peril of mysticism—the sublimation of the historical actuality into illusion, the other escaped it. The truth which Leucius seems to have been reaching after was that the Cross was not temporal and transient, but a fact established in the constitution of things; and to give expression to that truth he employed Hellenistic modes of thought, just as his more orthodox contemporaries did, because he could do nothing else. He was, in fact, affirming the truth thus stated by a modern student of mysticism, that "the law of gravitation is not more deeply scored on the heart of nature than is the Cross of Christ."

The precise form which the doctrine of the Cross takes in the Acts of John is suggestive of Valentinian influence. Describing the Valentinian system, Irenæus says (*Har.* i. 3. 5): "Then concerning the Boundary of theirs, to which indeed they give many other names, they declare that it has two powers, the establishing and the dividing, and that it is the Cross according as it establishes and makes steadfast and the Boundary according as it divides and separates." It should be noted that in the Acts the Cross of Light is also called by many names, and

that its function is the double one of establishing and separating (ch. 98).²²¹ This is enough to show that Leucius moved in a world of ideas very similar to that of the Valentinians, but when we bear in mind the views of Irenæus it comes short of proving that the Acts of John had its origin in Gnostic circles outside the Church.

Leucius' doctrine of the Cross is represented as having been given by a secret revelation. In this respect it is in the same category as the doctrines promulgated by Gnostic sects. At the basis of all Gnostic doctrine, as has already been pointed out, lay the thought of the imperfection of the evangelic record. In the teaching of Jesus there were heights and depths of truth which not only were hidden from the undiscerning and unspiritual multitude, but were dimly understood even by the disciples. The mysteries of the kingdom of God had been revealed to them, but in these mysteries there were inner meanings which were far beyond their comprehension. And not only so : on account of their spiritual immaturity Jesus was forced to withhold truths for which they were as yet unprepared. As it was with His teaching, so it was with His personality and the events of His life. The evangelists had described what lay open on the surface, but the inner inexhaustible wealth of all that Jesus did and was still awaited discovery. The Gnostics claimed to have received illumination on all that remained dark and undisclosed by means of a secret revelation which for the most part was declared to have been given by the Risen Lord to chosen ones among His disciples.²²² To them was made known the true nature of Christ's person ; the events of His life which the Gospels had set forth in their outward appearance had their inner reality unveiled ; and the truths which the disciples could not bear at an earlier stage were at last disclosed. We need not stay to point out the large element of truth which there was in all this ; there are infinite depths of meaning in Christ which

the historical facts can only suggest. But in the hands of the Gnostics this method of construing the evangelic data led to a violent break with history, with the result that what was recorded in the Gospels was conceived not only as fragmentary and imperfect, but as possessing no reality. When we read the Acts of John we find ourselves in this Gnostic atmosphere. The contrast between the unreceptive multitude and the disciples which we find in the words of Jesus (Mark iv. 11 ; Matt. xiii. 11 ; Luke viii. 10) is sharpened into scorn for the unenlightened : "Care not therefore for the many, and those who stand outside the mystery despise" (ch. 100). The events in the life of Jesus were not simply unintelligible to the minds of ordinary men who misconstrued them (ch. 97) ; they were so wonderful that they passed the comprehension of those to whom their mystery had been made known (ch. 93). Indeed the facts of the Gospel tradition were no longer thought of as the substance of the revelation given in Jesus Christ ; they were merely the shadows of supersensible realities which were apprehended through *γνῶσις*. In these circumstances nothing could serve but a new revelation given by the Lord Himself, and that was received by John in secret on the Mount of Olives.

Plainly, then, the attitude to the evangelic tradition adopted by Leucius was that of the Gnostics generally. What, however, remains to be considered is whether that attitude was so exclusively characteristic of the Gnostic schools as to stamp the Acts of John as one of their products. The notion of a progressive unfolding of the meaning of Christ's person and teaching was, of course, the common property of all Christians. It was in the conviction of that truth that the author of the Fourth Gospel narrated the facts of the Gospel tradition in the light of the larger meanings found in them by growing Christian experience.²²³ The words of Jesus reported in this Gospel are, in fact, the common starting-point of Gnostic and orthodox : "I

have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth. . . . He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you" (John xvi. 12 ff.). But what distinguished the author of the Fourth Gospel from Leucius in the application of this profound conception was the fact that while the latter discarded history for his symbolic interpretation of it, the former kept a firm footing amid historical realities. There were, however, others in the Church who approached the Gnostic standpoint a little more nearly. This, in particular, was true of Clement of Alexandria, who claimed the name 'Gnostic' for the perfect Christian and found the true meaning of many evangelic facts by the method of symbolism. As Inge says: "The conception of the earthly life of Christ as a grand symbolic drama or Divine mystery-play for the enlightenment of humanity was quite in accordance with Alexandrian philosophy."²²⁴ Moreover, Clement uses language which suggests his belief in the imperfection of the written Gospels, and indicates his acceptance of the view that the risen Christ revealed to chosen disciples truths which in His earlier ministry had not been disclosed. Thus in a passage in the seventh book of the *Hypotyposes* as recorded by Eusebius (*H.E.* ii. 1. 4) we find him saying: "The Lord delivered the true knowledge (τὴν γνῶσιν) after His resurrection to James the Just and John and Peter." Clement, in fact, went so far in the Gnostic direction that Photius held him guilty of uttering blasphemous nonsense, although as an afterthought he charitably suggested that perhaps Clement had been impersonated by another (*Biblioth.*, Cod. 109). As has already been pointed out in the chapter on "Gnostic Gospels," the idea of a secret tradition supplementing or interpreting that which was found in the written Gospels was practically universal in the early Church. Tertullian believed in revelations given by Christ

after the resurrection and naturally found that they dealt with matters in which he himself was interested moral discipline and the prohibition of second marriages (*de monog.* 2), while Origen speaks of post-resurrection instruction given to the disciples as to the true meaning of the Jewish law (*c. Celsum*, ii. 2).

It is plain, then, that the author of the Acts of John in setting forth secret revelations given by Christ was simply availing himself of an instrument sanctioned by the Church for the legitimatization of new truths not recorded in the written Gospels. The important question to determine is whether any community within the Great Church would have been disposed to accept "the revelations" which we find in the Acts of John. We are going as far as we are entitled to go when we say that it is just possible. Certainly Schmidt goes to an indefensible extreme in insisting that the doctrine of the Johannine Acts is of such a character that it would have been accepted without demur in Church circles generally. Neither Clement's teaching nor the undeniable acceptance by catholic Christians of beliefs which found a place in Gnostic systems is sufficient to establish that assumption. But we are probably justified in saying that there were individuals belonging to the Great Church who looked with favour on the views of Leucius and shared his Gnostic sympathies, and that there were communities in which the desire for popular tales about the doings of the apostles was so strong that in an atmosphere charged with Hellenistic currents of thought, writings of the nature of the Acts of John would have caused no offence. That implies, of course, that the romantic character of the narrative, so much to the popular taste, disposed readers not to be severely critical of the doctrines associated with it, but it also implies that these doctrines were not sharply discordant with the views which they themselves entertained. Although the doctrines in the Acts of John

have a much closer kinship with the views of Gnostics than with the doctrines generally accepted in catholic circles, the possibility is not to be excluded that Leucius was a representative of men within the Church who had strong Gnostic leanings, and that his book accordingly may justly be regarded as reflecting opinions on doctrinal and ethical matters which found no uncongenial home in some communities belonging to the Great Church. In any case, we should recognize the fact that in the middle decades of the second century there was no sharp line of demarcation between Gnostics and catholic Christians, but that there was a broad borderland where many, without separating themselves from the Church, held opinions which brought them very near the position of the adherents of Gnostic schools.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ACTS OF PAUL.

WHATEVER difficulty may be felt in determining the character of the community in which the Acts of John originated, there is no doubt that the Acts of Paul arose in an orthodox circle within the Church. For at least two and a half centuries after its appearance it was held in high repute and ranked as a work whose catholic standing was never seriously questioned. Unfortunately the book has survived only in a fragmentary condition. Three considerable sections, however, are complete, and among them one containing the well-known and attractive story of Thecla, of which at the outset it will be convenient to give a short account. The *motif* of the story is the glorification of virginity as the supreme Christian requirement and as a necessary condition of attaining to eternal life.

Thecla was an Iconian maiden of good birth who from her window listened to St. Paul as he discoursed on "virginity and prayer." She was so fascinated by the apostle's teaching (she was "tied to the window like a spider"), that she decided to embrace a life of chastity, and the entreaties of her mother and of her affianced lover Thamyris were unavailing to move her from her purpose. At the instigation of Thamyris the apostle was cast into prison for sorcery, and was visited there by Thecla, who bribed the gaolers with valuable gifts to secure admission.²²⁵ Brought before the judge, St. Paul was ordered to be scourged and to be expelled from the city while Thecla

was condemned to be burned. In the amphitheatre Thecla kept looking for St. Paul, "as a lamb in the wilderness looks round for the shepherd," and received a vision of Christ in the likeness of the apostle. She was miraculously delivered from death by a violent storm of rain and hail which extinguished the blazing pile. Finding St. Paul again, she asked for baptism, but was counselled to have patience. In Antioch, Alexander, an influential citizen who was providing games for the people, became enamoured of Thecla and embraced her in the street. She, resenting the familiarity, pulled off the crown which Alexander wore as the representative of the emperor. For this act of impiety she was condemned to the wild beasts, and was put for a time under the care of Queen Tryphæna, who was on a visit to the city. On the day of the games a lioness which was let loose on her died in defending her against the attack of other animals. Thereafter, believing that her end was near, Thecla leapt into a pool where seals were kept and declared: "In the name of Jesus Christ I baptize myself on my last day." Once more she was miraculously preserved. When the enraged Alexander was about to have her torn asunder by maddened bulls, Queen Tryphæna fainted, and Thecla was set at liberty out of fear lest the anger of the emperor to whom the queen was related should be visited on the city. Thecla went immediately in search of St. Paul, and finding him, was commissioned to "teach the word of God." This she did first at Iconium and afterwards at Seleucia, where she died.²²⁶

The other complete sections of the Acts are those containing the Corinthian Correspondence and the Martyrdom of Paul. Of the former, in which St. Paul appears as the opponent of popular Gnostic teaching, we shall have occasion to speak later; the latter, which tells of the apostle's death under Nero, is a worthless story calling for no special notice.

That the Acts of Paul had its origin in an orthodox community is put beyond question by an important reference in Tertullian's tractate *De Baptismo* (ch. xvii.)—a work which may be dated within a few years on either side of the close of the second century. A controversy had arisen in Carthage as to the duties which women should be permitted to discharge in the service of the Church, and those who advocated their right to teach and to baptize appealed to the Acts of Paul as showing that they had apostolic authority on their side. Tertullian entered the lists against them, and effected their discomfiture by stating from his knowledge of the authorship of the book that it was not an apostolic writing, but the work of a man who had incurred ecclesiastical censure. The passage is as follows: "Now if those who read the writing falsely bearing the name of Paul (*Pauli perperam inscripta*) claim the example of Thecla in support of the right of women to teach and to baptize, let them know that the presbyter in Asia who composed the book, as though he would add something of his own to the glory of Paul (*quasi titulo Pauli de suo cumulans*), was deprived of office, when he had been convicted and had confessed that he did it from love to Paul." This notice is important on several grounds. It settles the *provenance* of the Acts; it shows that it belongs to the second century; and above all it makes it absolutely clear that it had its origin within the catholic Church.

We need not concern ourselves to attempt a more particular definition of Tertullian's words "in Asia," because with the material at our disposal we can say nothing definite. Nor need we enter into the discussion by which the date is fixed within tolerably narrow limits, but may content ourselves with noting that the book was written about the year 170. What is of importance is that we should consider on what grounds the Asian presbyter became subject to ecclesiastical discipline.

There are two opposing views—the first, that the author's degradation from office was due to the erroneous doctrines which the book contained ; the second, that it was the result of his falsely attributing to St. Paul utterances which were not his. Tertullian's words seem certainly to suggest that false attribution was the ground of offence. In repudiating the right of women to engage in the official ministries of the Church—a right which his opponents supported by adducing the case of Thecla—Tertullian did not state, what without doubt he would have very gladly stated, had he known it to be true, that the presbyter was deposed for heterodox opinions, but that he had made an illegitimate use of St. Paul's authority to advance his own views. The author pleaded that he had acted in good faith ; what he had done he had done *amore Pauli* and with an honest desire to enhance the glory of the apostle ; but the Church did not accept the plea as sufficient to exonerate him : he had been guilty of an offence about which ecclesiastical feeling was growing very sensitive—the attempt “ to mould public opinion and affect Church teaching under a false assumption of apostolic authority.”²²⁷ It is, of course, possible that the Church also disapproved of the teaching of the Acts of Paul. The Montanist controversy was at the time beginning to exercise the mind of Christian communities, and the prominence of prophetesses in Montanist circles was calculated to prejudice the claim on the part of women to engage in official activity within the Church ; in any case, whether the Church approved or disapproved, it had good reason, so long as that claim was in debate, for objecting to the action of any one who unwarrantably introduced apostolic authority into the question. Similarly with the “ ethical enthusiasm ” of the Acts—its insistence on extreme asceticism as a condition of everlasting blessedness. That may have aroused antagonism within the community to which the

presbyter belonged, although judging from the popularity which the Acts subsequently enjoyed one may say that a feeling of that kind, if it existed, was by no means general; nevertheless in whatever way the ecclesiastical authorities may have regarded this matter, they could not do otherwise than take a serious view of its presentation under the ægis of an apostolic name. Their objection to this method of controversy must, in fact, have been all the stronger, if they were favourable to the particular type of doctrine taught in the Acts. For to pass over without censure a writer who without due warrant ascribed the widespread convictions of Christian people directly to an apostle, would have laid them open to the damaging counter-attack of opponents against whose doctrine they brought apostolic authority to bear. It is indeed not impossible that it may have been sympathizers with Gnostic views against whom the polemic of the Acts is directed, who discovered and revealed the authorship of the book: if this were the case, even the meaner motive of policy would have led imperatively to the condemnation of the presbyter. But, apart from any such suggestion, it may be assumed that in an age when the claims of writings to be apostolic were being carefully scrutinized, and there was a canon almost definitely fixed into which nothing was received but the writings of apostles and apostolic men, the ecclesiastical authorities regarded with grave disapprobation any work brought under their notice which falsely claimed apostolic sanction for its opinions. Matters stood somewhat differently in earlier days before the Gnostic controversy had become acute, with the result that pseudonymous works innocently put forth were received without suspicion, if they were doctrinally acceptable. But that attitude was no longer possible in the later decades of the second century. Thus we may take it as certain that the main if not the only ground of the presbyter's deposition was

his illegitimate use of St. Paul's authority. There is no question of his sincerity when he said that he had acted through love of Paul ; he was unconscious, when he wrote his book, of misrepresenting the apostle in any way. It was his aim to add something to the glory of St. Paul, and he saw no better way of doing so than by depicting him as the authoritative source of his own convictions on Christian faith and duty.²²⁸ Certainly nothing would seem to have been farther from his mind than the thought of making an illicit use of an authoritative name ; nothing was more foreign to his spirit than the crafty cunning of the forger. But, as has been said, " his love for Paul became for him a tragic fate. . . . He represented the apostle as intervening in the theological controversies of the time through the invention of the letter to the Corinthians, and attempted in his person to give living reality to the ethical ideal of the popular Christianity of the second century." ²²⁹ Even in the case of a man whose motives were as honourable as the presbyter's apparently were, the Church had no alternative but to mark its disapproval of his action by depriving him of office.

The ground of the presbyter's deposition, accordingly, seems to be fairly clear. He had gone beyond the bounds of the permissible in ascribing his own views to the apostle. Reference has been made to the possibility of a subsidiary reason in objections taken to the teaching of the book. We shall, however, be little disposed to lay weight on that, when we consider that orthodox writers during the next two hundred years regarded the Acts of Paul as possessing almost canonical authority. This is a fact of fundamental importance in estimating the value of the book as a source of information about Christian thought near the close of the second century. Had there been any serious inconsistency between the views set forth in the Acts of Paul and those held by the Church generally, or (to speak more precisely) had there been any acute con-

sciousness of this, it is inconceivable that the book would have attained and held so long its high position in the estimation of ecclesiastical writers. It may be said that it is impossible to believe, for example, that the obligation of abstinence from marriage was accepted to any large extent by Christian people, and that, of course, must be admitted; but this by no means implies that the "ethical enthusiasm" of the Acts must have aroused antipathy in men's minds, for what they saw in it was the loftiest presentation of an ideal to which, however little they may have been prepared to translate it into conduct, they all paid homage. That may seem to be a poor compliment to pay to the sincerity of second-century Christianity, but the truth of it cannot, I think, be denied. We may do well to remember that the same crass inconsistency might be alleged to-day between the conduct of those who profess and call themselves Christians and some of the ethical obligations which they would never dream of questioning. The obligation, felt to be remote and tacitly regarded as impracticable, lies quietly side by side with the practical disownment of it. I take it that that is how things stood when a comfortably married second-century Christian had the encratite doctrine of the Acts of Paul preached to him. He allowed that it was a splendid ideal; he honoured those who accepted it; only it was not for him. The consequences of that attitude were, of course, deplorable. It led to the acceptance by the Church of the doctrine of a dual obligation, the higher for Christians who aimed at spiritual perfection, the lower for the ordinary run of people.

These considerations, I believe, sufficiently explain why it was that the Acts of Paul, in spite of the author's condemnation, enjoyed a great popularity. It was in accord with catholic taste. It reflected in its ethical outlook the ideals of the time. Tertullian's is the only voice that was raised in disparagement

of it, and that in reference to a single detail. Apart from him there is a chorus of consentient opinion regarding the book. Origen, who is the first to mention it by name, thought of it so highly that he quoted short passages from it for the purpose of elucidating or confirming the teaching of Scripture. Schmidt's judgment is amply justified that "in Origen's eyes the Acts of Paul was reckoned as a writing which in dignity could not be put on a level with the canonical writings, but stood extremely near to them, so that its orthodox character was not in question."²³⁰ In Rome Hippolytus, the contemporary and friend of Origen, in his commentary on the Book of Daniel, makes use of an incident from the Acts of Paul in a very striking way, namely, to argue from it to the credibility of Scripture. "If we believe (he says) that when Paul was condemned to fight with beasts the lion which was let loose on him lay down at his feet and licked him, why should we not also believe that which happened to Daniel?" (iii. 29. 4, ed. Bonwetsch, p. 176). That is a remarkable argument, and implies that the Roman Church early in the third century accorded the Acts a position which was little less than canonical. Without going into details we may recall the fact, mentioned in a previous chapter, that Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 25), drawing a sharp distinction between the Acts of Paul and those of other apostles, ranks it with writings whose catholic standing was universally admitted. Most remarkable of all, however, as showing the general respect in which the book was held as late as the end of the fourth century when the other Acts were being repudiated and condemned, is the passage in Augustine, *contra Faustum*, xxx. 4, where we read the Manichæan's defence of an encratite ethic against the charge of its being a doctrine of demons. The whole passage is too long for quotation, but a part may be given, it being premised that Faustus, for the sake of argument, leaves out of account the Acts of Peter, Andrew, Thomas, and

John, because the Church had excluded them from the canon and "with sacrilegious mind" had imputed to them "the doctrines of demons" -this with reference to 1 Tim. iv. 1 ff., which Faustus did not accept as Pauline. "Will you be able (he urges) to say the same also of Christ or of the Apostle Paul, who, it is not disputed, in like manner on every occasion revealed in word his preference for the unmarried as against the married, and also showed it in deed in his dealings with the most holy Thecla? But if this was not a doctrine of demons which Paul preached to Thecla . . ., who could make us believe that it was stated to be so by himself, as if the exhortation to saintliness could be also the will and doctrine of demons?" The argument of Faustus was admirably keen and to the point, resting as it did on the fact that the Acts of Paul was held in honour by the Church and that Thecla was revered as the first female martyr and apostle. The Church, Faustus contended, could not have it both ways; if First Timothy was accepted in which "forbidding to marry" was mentioned as a doctrine of demons (ch. iv. 1 ff.), how could the Church also accept the Acts of Paul in which that doctrine was preached by the apostle himself? Augustine was clearly conscious of the dilemma in which he was put by the argument of Faustus, and in his reply he found it discreet to pass it over in silence.

Thus all the witnesses whom we have adduced make it incontestably clear that despite the condemnation of the author, the Acts of Paul was regarded as teaching sound catholic doctrine. The marvels which the book recorded caused no difficulty but were rather welcomed: the age was credulous, and no limit was placed to the supernatural power of an apostle: and as for the doctrines set forth, they were in harmony with the taste and convictions of the growing catholic Church. When the Acts first appeared, the most orthodox circles would naturally welcome it for the energy of its attack on Gnostic teaching, if

for no other reason ; and both then and in later days its popularity was secure, because it enabled men to see their ideals and beliefs associated with the glorious age of the apostles. That it was eventually condemned as heretical was not due to doctrinal errors of its own, but was a fate which overtook it when on account of its extreme asceticism it was incorporated in the Manichæan canon.

Until the close of last century the Acts of Paul was supposed to have disappeared, leaving hardly a trace behind. Several scholars had argued that the *Corinthian Correspondence* containing the so-called Third Epistle to the Church at Corinth belonged to the Acts, and further that the *Martyrdom of Paul* which existed in various versions formed the concluding part of the book. Other less important passages were more or less confidently ascribed to the Acts, but everything was in the region of conjecture ; nothing, in fact, could with certainty be regarded as salvage from the lost book, but two very short quotations preserved by Origen. Then came Schmidt's important discovery in 1897 ²³¹ of a Coptic translation in a Heidelberg papyrus of large portions of the Acts of Paul, some of them in an extremely mutilated condition, which revealed the astonishing fact, never suspected by any critic, that the well-known Acts of Paul and Thecla was an integral part of the book.²³² At the same time the conjecture with regard to the *Corinthian Correspondence* and the *Martyrdom of Paul* was proved to be correct ; and, in addition, the fragmentary narrative outside these main portions showed that the Acts was a well-conceived work, giving a full account of the apostle's missionary activity. We now certainly possess one-third of the original writing, and it is possible that we have even more, as there are narratives about St. Paul found elsewhere which, some with practical certainty, some with greater or less probability, are ascribed by scholars to the Acts.

The narrative of the Coptic version, interrupted and fragmentary though it is, shows that the presbyter used the canonical Acts as the framework into which he inserted the additions that he desired to make to the story of his hero. A few pages of the papyrus are wanting at the beginning, which, on the assumption that the Acts commenced with the sending forth of St. Paul and his companions by the Church in Syrian Antioch (Acts xiii. 1 ff.), would leave room for a slight account of the mission in Cyprus. When the narrative opens, we find St. Paul at Pisidian Antioch (as in Acts xiii. 14), from which after his expulsion by the Jews he proceeded to Iconium (Acts xiii. 15 f.) where Thecla was converted. A flying return visit to Antioch in the company of Thecla followed, and then the apostle is found in Myra ²³³ in Lycia, from which he journeyed partly by land and, we may assume, partly by sea to Sidon. This itinerary is in rough correspondence with St. Paul's first missionary tour; and although the fragmentary condition of the Acts does not enable us to compare it further in detail with the canonical writing, the mention of Jerusalem and a meeting with Peter, the story of an incident at Philippi involving a previous visit to Corinth, and an account (found elsewhere) ²³⁴ of the apostle's fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus, which we may without hesitation regard as derived from the Acts, are enough to show that the general plan of the canonical history must have been adhered to. But while this is so, it is clear that the author allowed himself considerable freedom, and in the matter of details, such as the mention of the apostle's fellow-travellers, and of the part which they played, he did not hesitate to use the names of persons who are referred to in an entirely different connexion in the canonical writings. The presbyter, as one would expect from the position which he held in the Church, was thoroughly conversant with the New Testament books, and his knowledge was of such an intimate nature that

he could use with ease the material which he borrowed from them.

The Asian presbyter was an indifferent literary craftsman. In this respect he is far behind the author of the Acts of John, from whom he probably borrowed incidents, and to whom he may have owed the impulse to write his book. Naturally the Gnostic atmosphere of the earlier work must have been uncongenial to him, but all the more on that account he would be impelled to give a setting, free from any suspicion of the Gnostic spirit, to the encratite ideal which he was concerned to exalt, and which both he and his predecessor were at one in honouring. In any case there is a marked contrast in the intellectual capacity and literary ability of the two writers. The author of the Acts of John was a consummate artist, which the presbyter certainly was not. His book has nothing of the glow and imagination which are found in many passages of the Acts of John, but is characterized by poverty of diction and style and by an even greater poverty of conception in detail. The Thecla story is pleasantly told, with some simplicity and freshness of feeling, but when it is taken along with the other episodes which are preserved, one is unfavourably impressed by the recurrence of similar situations,²³⁵ by the monotony with which people are raised from the dead, and by the frequency of the supernatural deliverances wrought for the faithful.

There is an important consideration, however, which should be borne in mind, if we would avoid the risk of doing injustice to the presbyter. We have only fragments of his book, and it is possible that if we had the whole we should be led in some measure to modify our judgment based on the somewhat tiresome recital of marvels. There are sufficiently plain indications that the author was not content merely to write a romantic tale, teeming with wonders. The Beatitudes in the Thecla section and the Corinthian Correspondence reveal the presbyter's

doctrinal interests which certainly claimed a much larger space in his book than at present appears. There is the quotation by Origen : " here is the Word, a living creature," which suggests that in some section of the Acts the presbyter discussed the Logos Christology. Origen's words are as follows : " As we have perceived that Wisdom is the beginning of God's ways, and how it is said to have been created, typifying and embracing the forms as well as the principles of the whole creation, in like manner we must understand that it is the Word of God, in the sense, that is, that it reveals . . . the meaning of the secrets and mysteries which are contained in the Wisdom of God ; and accordingly it is said of the Word that it is (so to speak) the Interpreter of the meaning of that which is hidden. *Thus the statement also which is written in the Acts of Paul* seems to me to be to the point : ' here is the Word, a living creature ' (*hic est Verbum, animal vivens*). John, however, says more sublimely and gloriously in the beginning of his Gospel . . ." ²³⁶ That Origen thought it worth his while to quote from the Acts in such a context, is sufficient to prove that it contained some theological thinking which was worthy of respect. Origen has another reference to the Acts in his Commentary on St. John (ch. xx. 12) where he says : " If any one is pleased to accept that which is written in the Acts of Paul as spoken by the Saviour, ' I am about to be crucified afresh.' " Further, some extremely mutilated passages in the Coptic version show that the apostle was represented as dealing with questions about Christ as the Saviour and, apparently in controversy with Jews, about Justification. One sentence referring to the latter is preserved : " man is not justified by the law, but he is justified by the works of righteousness." Had these passages, together with those from which Origen quoted, been extant, we should undoubtedly have been able to see the Acts of Paul in a better perspective, and the value of the book, great as it is in its present

fragmentary state, as a source for our knowledge of second-century Christianity would have been considerably increased.

There are two passages which, if they could be ascribed with certainty to the Acts of Paul, would heighten our respect for the intellectual competence and outlook of the author. The shorter passage occurs in the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria (vi. 5. 42, 43), who in discussing one of his favourite ideas that God revealed Himself to the Greeks, giving them philosophy as their *παιδαγωγός* to bring them to Christ, says : " For that God, even as He purposed the salvation of the Jews through the sending of the prophets, chose also among the Greeks the best men in preference to the common herd, through causing them to come forward as prophets for their own people, so far as they were able to receive the Divine grace—that, apart from the Preaching of Peter, is made clear by the Apostle Paul when he says : ' Take also in your hand the Greek books ; recognize how the Sibyl reveals one God and the events of the future. And take Hystaspes ²³⁷ and read, and you will find that there, with even keener foresight and more clearly, it is written about the Son of God, and how many kings will array themselves against the Christ, through hatred of Him and of those who bear His name and of His faithful ones and of His patience and of His appearing.' Whereupon he asks us in one word : ' The whole world and all that is therein, whose is it ? is it not God's ? ' " From whatever source the quotation was taken, it is obviously part of a speech purporting to be delivered by St. Paul in his mission among the Greeks. It represents him, after the manner of his speech on the Areopagus in Athens, as adapting himself to his intellectual surroundings and bringing himself *en rapport* with his audience through referring to what was written in Greek books, in order that, starting from ground which was common to himself and to those who listened to him, he might lead them to Christ. Such a situation is one which we should naturally

expect to find depicted in the Acts of Paul, if we had the book complete. There is not only the Athenian speech of the canonical Acts which would suggest the author's attempting something of the same kind with fuller detail, and with the familiar apparatus of the second-century apologists; but as we see from a fragment of the Coptic version, we find an instance of a similar procedure when the apostle is represented as expounding the Christian faith with special reference to Jewish opposition and misunderstanding—from which we may assume that the author would be likely to describe him as doing the same from an appropriate angle when he was addressing Greeks. It has been suggested by Rolffs²³⁸ that there is an anti-Gnostic reference in the concluding words of the quotation ("the whole world and all that it contains, is it not God's?"), in which case they might well have been written by a man who in the Corinthian letter opposes those who declared that the world was not the work of God but of angels. It is a doubtful point, for what Clement was concerned with showing, and presumably also the writer from whom he quoted, was not that the Gnostic theory of creation was wrong, but that God's providence was universal, and that His revelation was not withheld from any. But be that as it may, it should be noted that Clement is manifestly quoting from a writing which he regarded as possessing high authority—a fact which, on the assumption that the writing was the Acts of Paul, would place him by the side of Origen in his estimation of the book. In questions of this kind there can, of course, be no absolute certainty, but there is a high degree of probability in the conclusion that Clement was quoting from the Acts of Paul. That book, at any rate, exactly fits the situation, and we know of no other which does.²³⁹

The other doubtful passage to which reference has been made is found in the *Polycratius* of John of Salisbury (about

1156), and deals with a speech of St. Paul at Athens. It runs as follows (reference has been made to the self-sacrifice of Codrus and to the voluntary exile of Lycurgus, after which John of Salisbury proceeds): "I avail myself of these examples all the more gladly, because I find that the Apostle Paul made use of the same when he preached to the Athenians. The illustrious preacher so endeavoured to win an entrance to their minds for Jesus Christ and Him crucified that he taught by the example of the nations that the deliverance of many had come through the ignominy of the cross.²⁴⁰ But these things, he argued, were not wont to happen save by the blood of righteous men and of those who held positions of rule among the people. Accordingly, no one could be found sufficient for the deliverance of all, both Jews and Gentiles, but Him to whom the nations were given as an inheritance and the whole earth was allotted as a possession. This, he further declared, could be no other than the Son of Almighty God, since no one besides God had power over all nations and lands. While, therefore, he so preached the ignominy of the cross that the foolishness of the peoples was gradually dispelled, by slow degrees he raised the word of faith and the language of the preacher to the Word of God and to the Wisdom of God, and even to the very throne of the Divine Majesty. And lest the power of the Gospel should be rendered worthless by the infirmity of the flesh, he expounded the works of the Crucified which, although they had been a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, were even confirmed by the testimony of fame, since it was agreed by all that none could do these things but God. But because fame is often far from the truth in one direction and in the other, he supported the witness of fame by showing that His disciples had done greater things, since sick persons had been healed of every kind of infirmity beneath the shadow of a disciple. Why should I multiply words? He who died

confuted by His resurrection the subtleties of Aristotle, the acuteness of Chrysippus, and the delusions of all philosophers.''

In seeking to determine whether this passage contains material drawn from the Acts of Paul, we should carefully note that the writer is not quoting his source verbally, but is paraphrasing and shortening it and weaving what he borrows into a narrative of his own. This fact meets the obvious difficulty presented by the allusions to Greek philosophers and by the literary character of the passage which is not in the manner of the writer of the Acts. It is no serious objection to urge that the thought is on a higher plane than that which is found elsewhere in the Acts, for, as we have seen, Origen quoted from the book in a discussion on Wisdom and the Word of God. Besides, the argument outlined by John of Salisbury cannot be said to be beyond the range of quite an ordinary thinker. Schmidt²⁴¹ finds something to surprise him in the reference made by St. Paul to the wonderful deeds of other apostles, but nothing could have been more natural in an author to whom miracles wrought by the apostles were the chief indication of the truth of Christianity and who, moreover, in the Corinthian Correspondence represents St. Paul as acknowledging his indebtedness to the apostles who had preceded him. The question of real moment is whether the speech is of the kind that one would naturally look for in such a book as the Acts of Paul. It is only what one might expect that the presbyter, who was well aware of the prejudices with which the apostle had to contend, should have depicted him as dealing on Greek soil with the "foolishness" of the cross. The way in which the question is approached forms a striking parallel to the argument in Clement's quotation. So similar are the two passages that it would not be surprising if it were actually the case that Clement and John of Salisbury were referring to parts of the same speech. And not only so, but Origen's quotation may

have been drawn from it as well. "Here is the Word, a living creature," would be in place in an address in which (as we read) the apostle lifted his thoughts to the Word of God and the Wisdom of God. Another significant fact should be noted. In the speech at Athens reported by John there is the same abundant use of scriptural phrases which we have seen to be a marked feature of the Acts. Nothing, in fact, forbids us to regard the Athenian speech as derived from the Acts of Paul; what we know and may legitimately infer suggests that it is. It is impossible to speak dogmatically, but it seems to me that we may conclude with some slight measure of confidence, as James does,²⁴² that John of Salisbury has preserved material found in the presbyter's account of St. Paul's mission work in Greece.

Whatever view we take of the doubtful passages which we have just discussed, it is clear from the certain fragments of the work that the Acts of Paul was much more than a romance written for a public which gloried in marvellous deeds wrought by the apostles. The presbyter was first and last a preacher and teacher. The book which he composed to glorify his hero was in reality a didactic writing, commending the truths which he desired to inculcate, now by story, now by letter and address. He was not gifted with much imagination, and his literary style was bald and commonplace, but his moral earnestness was intense. What gives his book significance is not its marvels but its message. He showed a true instinct, as all the writers of apostolic romances did, for conveying truth in a vivid and effective way by clothing it with flesh and blood and by enlisting in its behalf the influence of religious veneration. This didactic aim does not conflict with the presbyter's confession that "love of Paul" was the motive of his book. How could he more fitly set forth the glory of the apostle than by making him the medium through which the truths which he most surely believed to be the vital truths of the Christian faith were commended

to others? In the doctrine which he taught through the example and precept of the apostle the presbyter stood on the level of his own time; he was a representative figure in orthodox Christian circles near the close of the second century, and it is that which gives his book its value. Others besides him attempted a similar task and carried it through with finer literary gifts, but none so clearly as he was free from the alien influences which beat upon the Church's life and thought. It is accordingly as a reflexion of the Christianity of his time that we study the presbyter's book. Taking it all in all it is a dull book; there are no passages which one can quote for their beauty or for the elevation of their thought; but in spite of that it ranks with *Second Clement* as a classic source for our knowledge of second-century Christianity. How did Christians in these days think of Christ, of His salvation, of the conditions on which it was to be obtained?—these are the questions which the Acts of Paul helps us to answer.

It has already been pointed out that one marked feature of the Acts of Paul distinguishing it from other Acts is its anti-Gnostic polemic. It is mainly in the *Corinthian Correspondence* that this is manifest, and a short account of that section of the Acts may accordingly be given at this point. The apostle was in prison at Philippi when he received a letter from the Presbyters of the Church at Corinth, imploring his help against false teachers who were "overthrowing the faith of some by pernicious words." The false teaching is described concisely as follows: "They assert that one must not appeal to the prophets, and that God is not Almighty. There is no resurrection of the flesh. Man was not made by God. Jesus did not come in the flesh, nor was He born of Mary. The world is not the work of God but of angels." On receiving the letter Paul was greatly distressed. "It had been better (he said) if I had died and been with the Lord than that I should abide

in the flesh and hear such distressing words as those of this teaching and see sorrow coming upon sorrow." "Under much affliction" the apostle wrote an answer, which is full of phrases taken from the Pauline Epistles and the Gospels. After stating his conviction that Jesus Christ would hasten His coming because He could not tolerate the wrong of those who falsified His teaching, he continued: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I received from the holy apostles, my predecessors,²⁴³ who were all the time with Jesus Christ, that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of Mary who is of the seed of David, the heavenly Spirit having been sent into her by the Father, that He might appear in this age and deliver all flesh through His own flesh, and might raise us in the flesh from the dead, to declare which in advance He gave Himself as an example. And as man was created by God his Father, he was sought for after he was dead that he might be made alive by adoption. For the Almighty God, the Maker of heaven and earth, since He wished to save the Jews from their sins (for He had decreed that the house of Israel should be saved), bestowed on the prophets a part of the spirit of Christ and sent to the first Jews those prophets who, during a long period of time, proclaimed the worship of God free from error. But he who had power to throw just things into disorder, since he wished to be God, put them to death and bound all flesh of men through evil desires. Then God the Almighty, who is just, not wishing that His work should be rendered vain, had mercy and sent His Spirit into Mary that the evil one might be condemned by the same flesh as that by which he had brought death (into the world). For in the body Christ Jesus has saved all flesh, showing in His own body a temple of righteousness, through which we have been set free. They who agree with these men are not children of righteousness but of wrath, because they despise the providence of God in saying that heaven and earth and the things

that are therein are not the work of God. . . . When they say that there is no resurrection of the flesh, they say it for themselves, for they will not rise again because they have not believed that He who was dead rose. . . . Let no man trouble me, for I am in bonds that I may win Christ, and I bear in my body His marks that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. And all they who give attention to this rule which they have received through the most blessed prophets and the holy Gospel shall receive a reward from the Lord. But they who neglect these things shall be cast into eternal fire. And all they who walk in this manner, they are a generation of vipers. Come ye apart from them in the strength of the Lord, and peace will be with you."

One thing should be noted with reference to the Corinthian Correspondence in general. The acute distress which the Asian presbyter represents the apostle as suffering is a reflexion of his own feeling, and shows that he was dealing with a real situation about which he was seriously concerned. A state of affairs had arisen within the Church which threatened it with grave peril. Gnostic views were finding a welcome in Christian communities—not the abstruse mythological speculations which had no interest for the popular mind, but doctrines springing from a dualistic view of things which were in sharp opposition to the cardinal convictions of the Christian faith—the creation of the world by the one supreme God, the unity of Divine revelation by which the message of the prophets was linked with the Gospel, the incarnation of the Son of God, the Divine origin of human nature, the resurrection of the body. The presbyter realized that the issues raised were vital to the continuance of Christianity. There can be no doubt that in his passionate denunciation of the heretical teachers—they were "a generation of vipers"—he was giving voice to the prevalent opinion, but the party with Gnostic leanings

which he attacked was apparently strong enough to bring about his degradation from office by calling attention to the unjustifiable use which he had made of the authority of St. Paul. In later days when the circumstances of his fall were forgotten, the fictitious letter received a place in the armoury of the Church against heretics and was regarded as canonical in the Syrian and Armenian Churches. Ephraim introduced the Corinthian Correspondence into his commentary between 2 Corinthians and Galatians, and, apparently ignorant of the fact that it belonged to the Acts of Paul, used it to confute the Bardesanites, whom he charged with falsifying Acts of the Apostles to support impious doctrines which the apostles had opposed! The fictitious correspondence finally disappeared from the Syrian Bible with the appearance of the Peshitta.

In a book like the Acts of Paul we do not look for systematized doctrine. Speculative questions were dealt with, as Origen's quotation about the Logos shows, but we have no means of knowing to what extent these bulked in the presbyter's work. In any case the time for accurate dogmatic definition had not yet come, and so far as we can judge, the theology of the Acts was extremely simple. As against the polytheistic tendencies which obtained in Asia Minor and survived in Gnosticism with its hierarchies of principalities and powers, the Acts is explicitly monotheistic. "Verily God is one and there is no other; one also is Jesus Christ His Son" (*Copt. Fragm.*). There is no distinction between the God of creation and the God of redemption—a distinction to which the Gnostics were driven in their attempt to solve the problem of evil; God who made men in His likeness seeks them in mercy when they have been seduced by the cunning of the serpent. The Spirit of God who wrought through the prophets for the salvation of Israel became flesh in Jesus Christ. Thus it would appear that the presbyter identified the Spirit with the Word of God ²⁴⁴ and that so far

as there was any doctrinal formulation in a Trinitarian sense the scheme was: God the Father Almighty—the Spirit or Logos—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Incarnate Spirit. Some such conception as this may have been the germ out of which the Subordination Christology grew, but as yet there was no attempt to define the relation between the Father and the Son. Men were conscious only of the religious value which they found in Christ, and that value placed Him indubitably within the realm of the Divine. The examination into the meaning of this valuation came in the great controversies of the third and later centuries: meantime the conception of Christ's divinity was naïve and unreflective. Thus we find modalistic tones in the Acts of Paul, as in the confession made by one whose son the apostle had raised from the dead: "I believe, my brethren, that there is no other God than Jesus Christ, the Son of the blessed" (*Copt. Fragm.*). There is something similar in a prayer of Thecla: "My God and God of this house, where the light did shine upon me, Jesus Christ, Son of God, my help in prison, my help before governors, my help in the fire, my help among wild beasts, Thou Thyself art God, and to Thee be the glory for ever" (*Acts of P. and Th.* 42). The same ascription of deity to Christ occurs in the petition which Thecla offers for the dead daughter of Queen Tryphæna—a passage which is interesting as one of the earliest testimonies to the custom in the Christian Church of offering prayer for the dead: "God of the heavens, Son of the Most High, grant (to Tryphæna) according to her desire, that her daughter, Phalconilla, may live in eternity" (*Acts of P. and Th.* 29). The distinctly Monarchian note found in the many prayers in the Acts of John is here absent; the Christology is the simple reflexion of the value of Christ in Christian experience which we find in the opening words of *Second Clement*: "We ought so to think of Jesus Christ as of God." One may remark here on the in-

frequency and poverty of the prayers in the Acts of Paul ; as a document of early Christian devotion it is not to be compared with the Acts of John.

Much more important than the simple Christology of the Acts of Paul is the central place which the extreme ascetic ideal receives in the doctrine of salvation. The saving work of Christ is conceived as the deliverance of human flesh from the bondage imposed upon it by the Evil One who had bound it with sinful lusts. This deliverance was wrought by the righteousness of Christ, who in His own flesh had broken the power of sin which had taken hold of all flesh. In this conception there is an obvious formal dependence on the Pauline doctrine that " what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and with reference to sin condemned sin in the flesh " (Rom. viii. 3, 4). But it should be noted that Christ's activity as Saviour is centred not in His death, as it is in St. Paul, but in the fulfilment of the Divine righteousness, which is thought of as a rigorously ascetic manner of life. " The holy works of Christ " (*Acts of P. and Th.* 20) are to be interpreted in this sense. Christ " showed in His own body a temple of righteousness " (*Corinth. Letter*, v. 17), and thus through His body kept pure from all defilement set all flesh free from the claim which the Evil One had on it. As a reward for this life of absolute ascetic purity, Christ obtained resurrection from the dead. All that Christ wrought and experienced is regarded as the type of all that takes place in the life of the Christian. Through His fulfilment of an ascetic righteousness which led to His resurrection, the way is opened up for those who believe in Him to do the holy works of Christ, and thus to obtain resurrection. In a sense it is true that Christ is thus viewed as our example, showing us what we ought to do to merit eternal life, but He is something more ; for in breaking the power of sin

in His own flesh, He has passed sentence of condemnation on the Evil One, and struck at his dominion in the seat of his power. The victory of Christ has revealed the fact that evil is an intrusion in human nature and can be cast out. Thus the Gospel of Christ's righteousness is preached that "in Him men should have hope . . . , that they may no longer be under judgment, but have faith and the fear of God, and knowledge of holiness and love of the truth" (*Acts of P. and Th.* 17).

The saving work of Christ, accordingly, lies in His condemnation of sin through His enkratite manner of life. In harmony with the popular tendency of Christian thought in the second century, there is no suggestion of a propitiation made to God for sinning men, whereby they are justified in the sight of God and receive forgiveness. What the presbyter made of the Cross we should very much like to know; if the passage in John of Salisbury mentioned above is derived from the Acts of Paul, he gave the Cross some place in his conception of Christ's redemptive work. But in the Corinthian letter there is no mention of it where we should naturally have looked for it, and indeed it is difficult to see what redeeming efficacy could be ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ in the presbyter's scheme of thought. To him salvation is not the free gift of God, reconciled to men by the death of His Son, which is appropriated by faith and experienced as a present possession, but a future good to be won by a man's own purity and strength of soul. Divine grace is exhausted in the forgiveness bestowed in baptism, and forgiveness is conceived, not as the adoption into a new relationship in which God's constant mercy is the abiding inspiration to holiness of life, but as a single Divine act by which a man's past sin is cleansed away that he may make a fresh start. Salvation is thus something which has to be achieved by the believer, by his doing "the holy works of Christ," that is, by his living in complete detachment from the world. Only those who in

obedience to Christ have welcomed the encratite manner of life and keep their bodies pure, can receive the seal of baptism and obtain the reward of eternal life. The doctrine of the Acts of Paul is accordingly summed up as "the word about ascetic purity (ἐγκράτεια) and the resurrection" (*Acts of P. and Th.* 5). Eternal blessedness is dependent on a rigorous asceticism. "There is for you no resurrection unless ye remain chaste and defile not the flesh" (*Acts of P. and Th.* 12). This teaching is most plainly set forth in the Beatitudes given in the Thecla portion of the Acts, which for the most part are meant to be regarded as an exposition of the sixth Beatitude of Jesus with which they open. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are they who have kept the flesh chaste, for they shall become a temple of God. Blessed are the continent, for God shall speak with them. Blessed are they who have renounced this world, for they shall be well-pleasing to God. Blessed are they who have wives as though they had them not, for they shall receive God as their inheritance. . . . Blessed are they who have kept the baptism, for they shall rest with the Father and with the Son. . . . Blessed are the bodies of the virgins, for they shall be well-pleasing to God, and shall not lose the reward of their chastity, for the word of the Father shall be for them a work of salvation in the day of His Son, and they shall have rest for ever and ever" (*Acts of P. and Th.* 5 f.). It was while the apostle was thus expounding "the words of Christ" that Thecla listening at her window was converted.

There is in all this a very grave falling away from the Pauline conception of salvation. In St. Paul's view, the Divine mercy is at the heart of all things; it is the one amazing fact which moves and wins men, and re-creates them to the inmost centre of their being. It has that power because it is given freely out of the everlasting grace of God for sinning men, and because

it is given through sacrifice out of unknown depths of Divine sorrow and anguish revealed in the Cross of Christ. Of all this the presbyter despite his love of Paul had not the slightest understanding. In his book we see that the legalistic spirit against which the apostle fought his chief battle has again returned, not wholly, perhaps, through the influence of Judaism, but in part as the outcome of the permanent disposition of the human heart to regard the freedom of Divine forgiveness as too good to be true. If men are to find peace with God, there is something, they feel, which it is imperative that they should do.²⁴⁵ Thus instead of the doctrine of justification by faith we find in the Acts of Paul that "men are justified by the works of righteousness"—these works being an ascetic manner of life. This legalistic conception of salvation is characteristic of second-century Christianity. The same note as in the Acts of Paul recurs again and again in Second Clement. "What shall we do to obtain (life eternal and the rest of the kingdom), but walk in holiness and righteousness and consider these worldly things alien, and not desire them?" (ch. 5). "If we bid farewell to these enjoyments and conquer our soul in refusing to fulfil the evil lusts, we shall be partakers of the mercy of Jesus" (ch. 16). "Keep the flesh pure and the seal unstained, to the end that ye may receive life" (ch. 8). There is a real shifting here of the centre of gravity of the Christian message. Righteousness and good works are prominent in St. Paul, but they come from the inward renewing power of the Divine mercy in Christ, whereas in the Acts of Paul, in Second Clement, and in the literature of the second century generally, they are something to be achieved with much concern and diligence, lest one come short in the day of judgment and forfeit the reward of eternal life. Nevertheless, while this is so, there is manifest in these writings the intense moral earnestness of the new faith which did so much to commend it to the nobler

minds in paganism. Whatever may be said of the historical credibility of the Thecla story, there is no doubt that we are brought face to face with essential truth when we read that Thecla was won to Christianity by the high appeal of the life of austere purity and utter unworldliness.

With the stress laid on rigorous asceticism as a condition of everlasting blessedness, a question of serious moment arose as to the position of Christians who sinned after baptism. This was no new question ; it had emerged in the primitive Church and had been answered in different ways. So long as the grace of God in salvation was magnified and forgiveness was realized not simply as the remission of past sins, but as a new and permanent condition into which men entered through faith in Christ, there was no real problem to cause anxious concern ; post-baptismal sin, though not minimized, but rather felt to be more heinous by those who had experienced the Divine redemption, did not exclude the penitent from the everlasting mercy. But even in the first century, as we see in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the view was entertained that for Christians who fell into sin there was no hope of forgiveness. This rigoristic view, that the Christian must be sinless after baptism or else fall out of the covenant of grace, was extremely common in the second century, when the sufficiency of the grace of God was obscured by the doctrine of merit. In particular, when an ascetic righteousness was regarded as the essential preliminary to baptism by which past sin was cleansed and as the abiding obligation by which the seal of baptism was kept unstained, the problem which exercised all earnest minds was the fate of those who lapsed into sin. The possibility of such a falling away, which could not be regarded as remote when the demands on human nature were so severe, filled men's minds with misgivings and fears ; who could say whether the way of repentance would be still open to those who had

“forgotten the cleansing from their old sins” ? (2 Pet. i. 9). This is the feeling reflected in second-century writings generally ; we find it in Second Peter and in Second Clement, with its alarmist note with regard to Christians who fell short of an austere righteousness. Hence the urgency and frequency of the appeal to “keep our baptism pure and undefiled” (2 Clem. vi.). It is not clear whether the author of the Acts of Paul held that forgiveness was impossible after baptism, but in any case the possibility was not one to be lightly assumed. One consequence of this was that baptism was postponed until the risk of falling away was reduced to a minimum. Teachers of the Church counselled delay. Tertullian, for instance, although he looked on baptism as bringing priceless blessings, and like others of his time regarded it as indispensable for salvation, did not wish it accepted in haste, because it involved a grave responsibility. “If any (he says) understand the burden of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay.”²⁴⁶ It was from this feeling that the apostle refused to give baptism at once to Thecla when she embraced the life of virginity. “Times are evil and thou art beautiful. I am afraid lest another temptation come upon thee worse than the first and that thou withstand it not.” Thecla pleaded : “Only give me the seal in Christ and no temptation shall touch me.” But the apostle replied : “Thecla, be patient, thou shalt yet receive the water” (*Acts of P. and Th.* 25). Old beliefs die hard, and in all ages even until now the reluctance shown by many to accept the responsibility of membership in full communion with the Church until late in life has its root in the unevangelical conception of salvation so prevalent in the second century.

The salvation which the believer obtains as the reward of ascetic purity is a future good and is conceived as the participation of the whole personality, body and soul, in the Divine

eternal life. The resurrection of the flesh is thus a cardinal fact in the soteriology of the Acts of Paul. It is nowhere suggested that salvation is a present possession experienced in the moral renewal of the inner man; the object of Christ's coming in the flesh was not to lead men into a new and immediately realized relationship with God, but to make manifest in His own person the ascetic purity, through conformity with which alone human nature in its totality could be raised into the sphere of Divine existence. Salvation is conceived eschatologically; its benefits can be experienced only when men in the flesh are raised from the dead and enter the heavenly kingdom. Thus, as Schmidt remarks in discussing the doctrine of salvation in the *Epistola Apostolorum*, which has close affinities with the Acts of Paul, "the Christian faith is anchored in the hope of the bodily resurrection."²⁴⁷ This doctrine of resurrection was part of the spiritual inheritance which Christianity received from Jewish apocalyptic, and although it was often crudely conceived (as it is in the Acts of Paul and in other popular writings of the second century), it has permanent validity in the assertion of the truth that the whole being of man is capable of redemption and that the body as the organ of the soul's activities is destined to share in the life which is eternal. The doctrine was repudiated by the Gnostics, for whom salvation was the deliverance of the soul from its earthly prison-house; it was denied or pushed into the background even by catholic Christians who, under the influence of Hellenistic thought, conceived immortality, not as the continuance in new conditions of the whole personality, but as the immortality of the soul. How reluctant Christians in the Greek world were to accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the body we learn from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthian Church (ch. xv.), while later, as we see from 2 Tim. ii. 18, there were Christian teachers who spiritualized the resurrection and held

that it was already past. A somewhat similar allegorization of resurrection is referred to in the Acts of Paul, where we read (*Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 14) that Demas and Hermogenes, the renegade disciples of the apostle, state: "we shall teach thee about the resurrection that it has already taken place in the children which we have." That the catholic doctrine did not establish itself without some difficulty is clear from 2 Clement, 9, and Irenæus (*Hær.* v. 2 f.),²⁴⁸ as well as from the vigorous polemic in the *Epistola Apostolorum* and the Acts of Paul. The conviction of the bodily resurrection was supported by arguments from analogy, but the main ground on which the doctrine rested was the fact that Christ had risen from the dead. Thus we read in the Acts of Paul, after the author has adduced the argument taken from 1 Cor. xv. 26 ff., based on the new and abundant life which springs from the seed cast into the earth: "If we are unwilling to take an example from the seed grains, you certainly know that Jonah, the son of Amittai, when he did not wish to preach against Nineveh, was devoured by a sea monster and after three days and three nights rose from the dead from the lowest depths. For God heard the prayer of Jonah and nothing of him was destroyed, neither a hair nor an eyelid. How much more will He raise you up who have believed in Christ Jesus, even as He Himself was raised up!" (*Corinth. Letter*, 28 ff.). Here it is plain that the argument for the resurrection of the flesh which was regarded as decisive was Christ's resurrection. Thus also we read in the *Epistola Apostolorum*: "Verily I say unto you, As My Father has raised Me up from the dead, so will ye also rise again and be taken up to the highest part of the heavens."²⁴⁹ The only other point which should be noted in the doctrine of the resurrection as set forth in the Acts of Paul is that resurrection does not take place in the case of all men. It is reserved for those who are found worthy of it. Ascetic purity

and resurrection are so vitally associated that the one is the condition of the other. "There is for you no resurrection unless ye remain pure and defile not the flesh." The contingency of resurrection is further made plain by the statement that those who deny it shall have no part and lot in it. "As to that which they say that there is no resurrection of the flesh, they say it for themselves, because they will not rise again, because they have not believed that the dead are raised" (*Corinth. Letter*, 24 f.). The writer of the Acts did not share the more commonly accepted doctrine that all men rose, "some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (*Dan.* xii. 2). Resurrection was morally conditioned; it was a reward granted only to the faithful.

It would carry us beyond the limits imposed by the aim of these studies if we entered on a full discussion of the historical trustworthiness of the Acts of Paul. But in general it may be said that the whole character of the Asian presbyter's work, and the manner in which he makes use of the material afforded him by the New Testament writings, are sufficient proof that we have to do with a narrative which for the most part is pure fiction, and one, moreover, in which even those elements that may have some basis in historical fact are almost entirely overlaid by a mass of legendary details. It is, however, only fair to say that we judge the author by a standard that is not quite relevant, if we seriously consider his book from the point of view of historic credibility. He was not particularly concerned about history; in the modern sense he was not concerned about history at all. The past interested him only in so far as it seemed to bear on the present; hence came the impulse to "paint the past in the colours of the present."²⁵⁰ He was an enthusiastic hero-worshipper, and he wrote a tale to glorify his hero of the kind that he knew would be eagerly read. In doing so, he made him the mouthpiece of his own thoughts and convictions,

believing that he was doing the apostle honour ; and his purpose was served when these were lodged in men's minds with the vividness of appeal which a fascinating story can command. If there were traditions of St. Paul known to him, he wove them into his tale, but where none existed to fit the scheme which he had framed, he used the licence of the romancer to create imaginative incidents in harmony with his conception of the apostle's character. In dealing with a didactic writing in the form of a tale we cannot safely employ the canon : *nisi historia sit, fraus scriptoris*. It is accordingly to take an unfair and needlessly harsh view of the presbyter's action to say, as Schmidt does, that he was an unscrupulous forger, who used every device with the intention to deceive.²⁵¹ If that had been his purpose, he could not have gone more clumsily to work. For one striking feature of his book is the appearance of persons mentioned in New Testament writings in impossible situations. Titus, for instance, is introduced during the first missionary journey of the apostle as carrying on work in Iconium before St. Paul appeared. Onesiphorus, who is known as one of the apostle's most loyal friends in Ephesus, is represented as a convert of Titus in Iconium. Demas and Hermogenes, of whom we read that they fell away from St. Paul in his later life, are mentioned as his travelling companions on his first missionary tour, and as already false in heart to the apostle. When their sincerity is suspected, they become actively hostile, and not only denounce St. Paul's teaching about virginity and the resurrection, but declare that the resurrection takes place in one's children, a doctrine similar to that attributed to Hymenæus and Philetus in 2 Tim. ii. 17 f. A deliberate forger, with the intimate knowledge of the New Testament writings which the presbyter admittedly possessed, could not have shown less skill. The fact seems to be that the writer was not in the least degree particular about accuracy of detail where

it was quite possible for him to be accurate. And the reason was that his interest was not in history, but in doctrine. Thus, if we consider his work, as we ought to do, in the light of his own quite evident aim, the enforcement of certain truths by romantic tales about the apostle whom he revered, it is illegitimate to judge him by a standard applicable to those whose conscience for historical veracity is very different from his. Nevertheless, while this is so, we cannot close our eyes to the baleful influence which so great carelessness about facts had on the future history of the Church. The extraordinary tales reported in this and other apostolic romances were accepted as true; the doctrines which were the writers' main concern were sometimes modified or rejected altogether, but the fictitious narrative which was used merely as a means to an end was treasured and still more wonderfully embellished. The result was serious. As Harnack says: "whole generations of Christians, yes, whole Christian nations were intellectually blinded by the dazzling appearance of these tales. They lost the eye not only for the true light of history, but also for the light of truth itself."²⁵² Truth cannot with impunity be tampered with, even when it is done in innocence for love of an apostle, and with a loyal desire to promote the Christian faith.

It is, then, not history or anything approaching it which we find in the Acts of Paul, but legend. And yet in the most important section of the Acts—the story of Thecla—there is good reason for believing that we are in touch, though not by any means directly, with a primitive and reliable tradition of the apostle's ministry in Iconium. Schmidt stands practically alone in holding that Thecla, who for generations enjoyed the most extraordinary veneration both in the East and West, was the imaginative creation of the presbyter. The reconstruction of the original tale by Sir William M. Ramsay in *The Church in the Roman Empire* is in many respects arbitrary and

unconvincing, but in the light of the facts adduced, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that a girl named Thecla actually lived in Iconium, and was converted to Christianity by St. Paul, and took a prominent part in the early Christian mission.²⁵³ The only point on which those who accept an historical basis for the story may reasonably differ, is whether it came to the presbyter through oral tradition or in a written document. There is much to be said in favour of the latter alternative, but it is by no means certain. In any case the story of Thecla, though rewritten by the presbyter, and expanded for the purpose of exhibiting in her the ideal of virginity, may with some confidence be regarded as adding "a new and genuine chapter to the history of St. Paul."²⁵⁴ That suggests the possibility that in other stories reported by the presbyter whose legendary character is apparent there may be an historical kernel, if we could separate it from the husk. But be that as it may, the significance of the presbyter's book is not to be found in any grains of fact hidden among his legends. "He has rendered a service of which he never dreamed; he has set in the light certain Christian communities of the second century, so little known and cast almost completely into the shade by the scarcity of authentic documents."²⁵⁵

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACTS OF THOMAS.

THE Acts of Thomas, the last of the apostolic romances to claim our attention, is a product of the Syriac-speaking Church and reflects the spirit and ideals which prevailed in Eastern Christianity for a considerable period both before and after its appearance. The latest of the so-called "Leucian" Acts, it is the only one which has been preserved complete—a circumstance which may be due to mere good fortune, but is more probably to be attributed to the great popularity which the book enjoyed. As a story it surpasses in interest the earlier Acts with which it came to be associated, and although its conception of the Christian life belongs to another world of thought than ours, we cannot fail to be impressed by the depth and sincerity of its religious feeling. In spite of ecclesiastical condemnation from the fourth century onwards, the book continued to be read in orthodox circles throughout the Church. That is by no means surprising, for not only were its religious seriousness and unworldly tone much to the liking of later generations, but in respect of doctrine there was almost nothing in it to give offence to catholic sentiment. The secret of its influence, in fact, lay in this, that its author was not interested in theological speculations, which in the nature of the case would have become antiquated, but in the spiritual fortunes of the human soul. In this he was a true son of the Syrian Church which, alike in Antioch and in Edessa, was much more

deeply concerned with practical religion than with theological discussion. On every page of his book he is revealed as a man of intense moral earnestness, whose aim it was to exhibit the sufficiency of Christianity to satisfy the yearning of the soul for peace through winning men to a life of complete detachment from worldly relationships and ambitions. The story which he wrote can, as Burkitt says, "challenge comparison with the *Pilgrim's Progress*." ²⁵⁶ The scenery and the underlying doctrinal conceptions are different: that is just what one would expect in writings so far apart in time; but in their art of telling a romantic story for religious ends and in the broad values which they attached to the temporal concerns of life, the Puritan of the seventeenth century and the Eastern Ascetic of the third were kindred souls. Both are inspired by the same profound conviction that personal salvation is a man's supreme, indeed exclusive, interest, and that a life in which every earthly joy and claim must count as nothing in comparison with the attainment of spiritual bliss, is the one thing indispensable for human happiness. To have the world beneath one's feet and to save one's soul alive at no matter what cost to natural ties and obligations, is the ideal alike of Bunyan and of the author of the Acts. The Acts of Thomas is a romance of conversion, the story of men and women redeemed from the transient aims and satisfactions of the world. "Let nothing that is on this side the other world get within you," said Bunyan, and that may be taken as striking the keynote of the Acts. As we read the book, we move in an atmosphere of wonderful happenings just as we do in the other Acts, but we feel that a quite subordinate place and value are assigned to them; they are seldom thought of as instruments for startling the worldly soul into repentance and faith, but are simply introduced as the normal accompaniments of the career of a man who is closely in touch with the hidden powers of the supersensible world. Thus in

spite of marvels which strike us as grotesque, the Acts of Thomas exhibits Christianity—a narrow and ascetic type of Christianity—with great impressiveness as a moral power changing men's lives, a power that needed no reinforcement by the shock of miracle, but depended on its bare appeal to conscience and on its inherent worth as the satisfaction of the cravings of the human heart.

The author of the Acts of Thomas belonged to that portion of the Eastern Church which had its main centre in Edessa, a city which lay to the east of the Euphrates, one hundred miles north-east of the modern Aleppo. The date of the book is somewhat uncertain, but it may be placed with considerable probability in the second quarter of the third century. The view has been widely accepted that it was the work of a writer who was in sympathy with the religious teaching of Bardaisan, the one outstanding figure in the Syriac-speaking Church at the close of the second century. The recent publication of Ephraim's Prose "Refutations" has, in Professor Burkitt's opinion, made that extremely doubtful.²⁵⁷ But be this as it may, the writer of the Acts was, we may say with some confidence, acquainted with Bardesanist teaching. Bardaisan, as we learn from Eusebius (*H.E.* iv. 30), was, to begin with, a member of the Valentinian school of gnosis but later adopted more orthodox views, without, however, being able to escape entirely from the spell of his early training. Epiphanius, with the support of other writers, reverses the order of change and states (*Hær.* i. 476 D) that Bardaisan, after being a distinguished teacher in the Church, turned aside to the Valentinian heresy. However that may be, we are informed by a late writer, who presumably had access to earlier sources, that on account of certain astrological doctrines Bardaisan was excommunicated by the bishop of Edessa.²⁵⁸ He had, however, attracted many disciples, and those who adhered to him after his separation from the Church

formed a sect which existed for two hundred years until it was brought into the orthodox communion by Rabbûla (A.D. 411-435). Eusebius, who speaks of Bardaisan's distinction as a writer in Syriac and of works which he wrote in opposition to the Marcionites and other heretics, refers in particular to a dialogue *Regarding Fate*, a book modelled on the Platonic dialogues which has had the good fortune to be preserved. This dialogue, written about 220,²⁵⁹ which discusses the old question of Freewill and Destiny, reveals Bardaisan not only as a singularly lucid and virile thinker, but as a man of winning personality, and we mention it here because there is a passage in the Acts of Thomas which is obviously derived from it. Speaking of the Divine requirements the apostle is represented as saying (ch. lxxxiii.): "We received not a commandment which we cannot fulfil, nor did God put upon us heavy burdens which we cannot bear. We are not commanded to build buildings which is the work of carpenters, nor to hew stones which stonecutters accomplish by their skill, but we are commanded to keep from doing to another what is displeasing to ourselves when it is done to us." Then follows the mention of sins from which we should refrain and of virtues which we ought to exhibit. The passage quoted gives no idea of the quality of Bardaisan's teaching, but what we are concerned with is the fact that it follows the argument of the dialogue, and has so many almost verbal agreements that there can be no reasonable doubt that the author of the Acts has borrowed from Bardaisan.²⁶⁰ This indebtedness on his part would be confirmed and would indicate a considerable sympathy with the doctrine of Bardaisan, if we could regard the great *Hymn of the Soul* as a product of the Bardesanist school. This, as we shall see, is exceedingly doubtful. Another fact which might suggest some connexion of the Acts with Bardaisan is the statement of Ephraim (c. 350) who charged the Bardesanists with pro-

pagating their master's heresies by forged Acts of the Apostles. It is precarious to assume that this is a reference to the Acts of Thomas, in which we find a rigorously ascetic view of life which was not shared by Bardaisan. There is the possibility, of course, that Bardesanists after their master's death adopted ascetic views which were prevalent in the Syrian Church.

The Acts describes the work and fortunes of Thomas in his mission in India.²⁶¹ The opening scene is at Jerusalem, where all the apostles were assembled to apportion the different spheres in which each should preach the Gospel. India fell to the lot of Thomas, but the difficulty of the task appalled him and he refused to accept it. It so happened that a merchant, an envoy from an Indian king, Gundaphar, was then in Jerusalem with a commission to buy a carpenter, and to him Jesus sold Thomas as a slave. In the company of the merchant Thomas set out for India, travelling, strangely enough, by sea, and on his way thither, at the marriage festivities of a princess in the city of Sandarûk (Greek version : Andrapolis), he sang a mystic wedding hymn and betrayed his miraculous gifts, and on that account was summoned by the king to pronounce a blessing on the bridal pair. After he had done this, Jesus appeared in the likeness of Thomas, whom He called His brother, and won the bride and bridegroom to a life of chastity. In India, at the capital of King Gundaphar, Thomas received a commission to build a royal palace, and spent the money given him for the work in relieving the necessities of the poor. In the city and neighbourhood the apostle wrought wonderful deeds in the destruction of a dragon and in the casting out of demons, and then, to provide a stage for the most important incidents in the story, with its *dénouement* in the martyrdom of Thomas, the scene is shifted to another city in India, ruled over by King Mazdai. On his journey thither, in the company of a general in the king's army, wild

asses were requisitioned for the apostle's service when the horses conveying him had broken down. Somewhat later, one of the wild asses, "which by the power of God was able to speak," delivered an address in which it appealed to the bystanders to have faith in Jesus Christ and to guard against the wiles of false teachers. Knowledge of the herald of the new God spread throughout the district, and Mygdonia, the wife of a near relative of the king, came to hear Thomas, with the result that she was converted and became "a maid of God." In spite of the entreaties of her husband Kârish, Mygdonia refused to return to her old manner of life. Thereupon by order of the king, to whom Kârish appealed, Thomas was cast into prison, where he sang the Hymn of the Soul. A further attempt to win Mygdonia back to her husband, which was made by the queen herself, ended in the queen's conversion. A favourite son of the king also embraced the Christian faith. Then came the inevitable end. The apostle was condemned to death by the enraged monarch. He was led out of the city and was slain by spear thrusts. His bones were later removed "into the regions of the West," but dust from his grave healed one of the royal princes from a grievous malady, and the tale closes happily by relating the conversion of the king.

That is the bare outline of the story given in the Acts of Thomas. It is an elaborate romance, skilfully told, with many marvels of a type which had become conventional in this class of literature. The wonders, however, are little more than the romantic setting of the real drama, in which the apostle plays his part as the herald of temperance, chastity, and voluntary poverty. If it be the case, which is doubtful, that the author was under the influence of Bardaisan, it is clear that he had no interest in the cosmological speculations associated with the name of that teacher. Gnostic tones are so little

discernible that it is a misuse of words to describe the Acts as a Gnostic writing, or indeed as anything else than a product of Eastern piety of the type characteristic of the Syrian Church.²⁶² In the author, who was first and last a preacher of the sufficiency of Christ and of a morality involving the complete renunciation of earthly joys and possessions, the popular religion and moral ideals of the Syriac-speaking Church found a voice. It is that which makes the Acts significant for us. We read in it how Christians in the East conceived the Christian faith and its ethical requirements.

Like many other writers of the period, the author was not deeply concerned with the historical Jesus, but when he speaks of the evangelic facts he does so in quite the orthodox fashion. There are no marked docetic traits, and those which appear are of a kind which the majority of Christians early in the third century would have had no difficulty in accepting. There are clear references to the Incarnation, such as the following: "He came from the heights and was called the son of the virgin Mary and son of the carpenter Joseph, He whose lowliness we beheld with our bodily eyes" (ch. 143); "Believe (said the apostle) in the Messiah who was born, that men might have life through His life, who also became a child and was educated that the perfect humanity might appear through Him" (ch. 79). Christ's condescension is praised in one of the apostle's prayers: "Glory to Thy majesty which came down for our sakes; glory to Thy highest kingdom which humbled itself for our sakes; glory to Thy strength which became weak for our sakes; glory to Thy deity which for our sakes appeared in the likeness of man; glory to Thy humanity which died for our sakes to make us alive; glory to Thy resurrection from the dead, for by it shall our souls have part in the resurrection and rest" (ch. 80). Redemption is represented as won by Christ's sufferings: "Thou, Lord, art He who gave

Himself for us and bought us with a price by His blood as a precious possession" (ch. 72). All this is conceived in an entirely catholic spirit, and if docetic thoughts are not far away, that is not surprising. We find an echo of the story in the Childhood Gospel of Thomas when we read of Jesus as a child: "He taught His own teacher, because He is the teacher of truth and the wisest of the wise" (ch. 79). The demons **complain** that they were misled by Christ's appearance, but that may be interpreted without assuming a docetic significance. "He deceived us by His very homely form and by His poverty and want. For when we thus saw Him, we thought Him to be a man clothed with flesh, not knowing that it was He who makes men live" (ch. 45).²⁶³ The passages quoted show that the reality of Christ's bodily nature was accepted, but it was apparently thought of as different from the ordinary human body, somewhat after the manner of the Valentinians. The apostle, speaking of the four elements of which his nature was composed with reference to the four spear-wounds which caused his death is represented as saying: "Now I learn that my Lord who was of one (element) was pierced by one (spear), but I consisting of four am pierced by four" (ch. 165). These docetic features associated with utterances which give prominence to historical facts in the earthly life of Jesus once again reveal the difficulty felt by many in the early Church (probably by the majority of Christians) in accepting without reserve the complete reality of Christ's human nature.

But even although it may be allowed that the writer's thought has a slight docetic strain, his interest in Christ is centred, not in conceptions of His nature when He lived on earth, but in the grace and compassion of the living and exalted Lord and in His adequacy to meet every human need. He is never weary of declaring the praise of Christ, and of inviting

men to seek their satisfaction in Him. "Believe in our Lord Jesus Christ (the apostle says) that your hope may be in Him, and that in Him you may have eternal life, that He may be your Companion in this land of wandering, a Haven in this troubled sea, and an overflowing Fountain in this thirsty land, a House stored with food in the place of the hungry, a Rest for your souls, a Physician also for your bodies" (ch. 37). Christ is for the writer a possession of which none can rob him, and the spiritual gifts which Christ bestows bring deep content and freedom from all care (ch. 136). The apostle's prayers breathe a spirit of sincere and warm devotion and of gratitude for the experience of Christ's mercy. "O Jesus Christ, Son of the perfect Mercy, O Rest and Calmness, . . . Saviour of our souls, sweet and inexhaustible Wellspring, unchanging, pure, and untroubled Fountain, Comrade and Helper of Thy servants in the strife, who dost drive back the enemy from us, and dost fight for us in many battles and givest victory to us in all, our true and invincible Athlete, our holy and victorious Leader who bestowest on all who are Thine imperishable joy and rest that knows no sorrow, Good Shepherd who didst offer Thyself for Thy sheep, who didst overcome the wolf and redeem Thy sheep and lead them to good pastures, we praise and glorify Thee and Thine invisible Father, and Thy Holy Spirit, the Mother of all creatures" (ch. 39). In this we catch the authentic tones of Christian piety touched by the glowing fervour and emotion of the East. One could quote many such passages from the prayers, which in their simple beauty and sincerity of feeling carry us past all that is bizarre in the marvels of the book. One more may at this stage suffice, taken from a prayer of intercession for those newly won to the knowledge and service of Christ. "I give thanks to Thee, Lord Jesus, that Thou hast revealed Thy truth in these men. . . . Cleanse them by Thy baptism and anoint them with Thy oil

that they may be pure from the error that encompasses them. . . . Give them to drink of Thine immortal fountain which is never turbid and never fails. . . . Grant that they may put their trust in Thee alone, and obtain the help that comes from Thee and the hope of their salvation, . . . and that they may be confirmed in Thy mysteries and receive the perfect benefits of Thy grace and gifts and flourish in Thy service and bear fruit to perfection in Thy Father" (ch. 25). There is a distinct liturgical note in the prayers of the Acts of Thomas, many of which may be drawn from early service books in use in the Eastern Church. Further examples will meet us when we deal with the Sacraments which hold a commanding place in the interest of the writer of the Acts.

The Christian life as depicted in the Acts of Thomas is one of extreme unworldliness. The apostle himself is the typical ascetic saint. This is the portrait given of him: "he continually fasts and prays and eats only bread and salt and drinks water; he wears one coat whether in warm weather or in cold, and he takes nothing from any one, but gives to others what he has" (ch. 20). Even more plainly than in any other of the apostolic romances the Christian ideal of morality is exhibited as a life of complete renunciation of earthly joys. The apostle's preaching is an elaboration of the Oxyrhynchus saying: "if ye do not fast to the world, ye cannot find the kingdom of God." The natural interests and activities of human life are regarded as matters with which a Christian has nothing to do. The married state is a state of sin (ch. 15). Home and the love of children are excluded from the province of religion. Men and women are warned against marriage because for the sake of their children they will grow selfish and rob the fatherless and widows, an ideal consideration which is strengthened by the unhappy prospect of laying up trouble for themselves in offspring who will be either idiots or evildoers. Only the unmarried

state can bring true happiness. "If ye present your souls pure to God," said the apostle to the royal bridal pair who had been won to a life of continence, "there will be born to you living children [that is, souls brought to Christ] and you will be free from care, and spend an untroubled life, looking forward to receive that incorruptible and true marriage, and you will enter as groomsmen into that bridal chamber which is full of immortality and light" (ch. 12).

It was a strange aberration from the teaching of Jesus with His love of children, but it was no extravagance of a fanatical spirit out of touch with prevailing sentiments of a more generous kind. It was the ideal of Syrian Christianity as a whole, then and for centuries afterwards. In the early part of the fourth century we find Aphraates, the most influential teacher of the Church in Edessa, expounding the doctrine that entrance into the communion of Christ is only for those who renounce the married life.²⁶⁴ There was for him something quite incompatible between Christian conduct and the married state. True marriage meant spiritual marriage to Christ. Thus baptism was reserved as a privilege for celibates, and only they were members in full communion with the Church. There were married persons with their families in Christian communities, but they formed an outer fringe of adherents who received the benefit of Christian teaching, but were not admitted to the Sacraments. A precisely similar state of things obtained in the Marcionite Church. Only those were received as members who were prepared to live a life of sexual continence. One would naturally imagine that a community in which these views were rigorously enforced was doomed to speedy extinction. But that was not the case. A stream of recruits flowed steadily in from the ranks of older people on whom the requirements of the Church no longer laid a heavy burden. Those who in their youth vowed themselves to a life of virginity and celibacy were

comparatively few in number ; the great mass of people brought up in Christian circles married, and were given in marriage ; they were content to remain in the position of adherents who regularly attended the services of worship until they were somewhat advanced in years, when they sought baptism and became members of the Church.²⁶⁵ Thus men and women made the best of both worlds. In their physical vigour they gave themselves to the interests of home and family which they believed to be frankly secular, and looked forward to a time when, without sacrifice, they could receive the benefits of religion and feel that their everlasting blessedness was secure.

“ Not till the fire is dying in the grate
Look we for kinship with the stars.”

Such a theory of the Christian life is self-condemned. It surrendered the natural life of men in the world to the dominion of the Evil One ; it took all worth and all real joy out of life when the ordinary human interests were divorced from the service of God ; it offered a premium to spiritual opportunism and duplicity, and degraded religion into a convenience for providing eternal salvation to those who had chosen to live a worldly and irreligious life.

The Christian ideal of conduct was thus conceived as a rigorous asceticism. The world and all that was associated with it was evil. There was no thought that redemption meant the consecration of every earthly relationship and interest by the spirit of religion : the salvation of the soul was everything and that was in the main a future benefit made possible by the renunciation of earthly things. Nothing in this gross unspiritual world was worth living for ; nothing in it was capable of being sanctified ; true life was attained only when men were delivered from its bondage. Thus we find one

of the apostle's converts saying : " Would that the days passed swiftly over me and that all the hours were one, that I might go forth from this world and go and see that Beautiful One of whom I have heard, that Living One and Giver of Life to those who have believed on Him, where there is neither day nor night, and no darkness but light, and neither good nor bad, nor rich nor poor, neither male nor female, nor slaves nor free-men, nor any proud and uplifted over those who are humble " (ch. 129).

The ethical ideal set forth in the Acts of Thomas is not, however, a life of mere abstinence from worldly concerns. It includes the positive virtue of compassion. This we find depicted in the story of the Building of the Heavenly Palace. The story runs in this wise. King Gundaphar, whose slave Thomas had become, gave him an order to build a palace. The site was chosen, and when the king would have had the building begun at once, Thomas, much to the king's surprise, declared that he could build only in winter. From the royal treasury the apostle was supplied with gold and silver which he spent going about in the cities and villages and ministering to the poor and afflicted. After a time the king, who was absent from home, sent to find out how the work was progressing and received word that only the roof was wanting. " Let the palace be roofed," said the king, and more money was sent to Thomas, who spent it, as before, on almsgiving. On the king's return he inquired of his friends how the palace was looking and was told that no palace had been built, but that the apostle had gone about the country giving to the poor and teaching them the new God. The king was troubled and sent for Thomas, and asked him when he might see the palace. The apostle replied that he could see it only when he departed from this world. The king was furious and began to consider how he should put Thomas to death. The same night Gad, the king's

brother, took ill and died. His soul was borne by angels to heaven, where it was offered a choice of dwellings. It desired to have a place in the lower chambers of a certain palace, but was told that that was not possible, as it was the palace built by the Christian for his brother. Then the angels let go the soul of Gad. It returned to its body, and word was sent to the king that his brother had come back to life. He hastened to his brother's house and was told of the heavenly palace which Thomas had built for him. Then the king understood and sent to have Thomas brought from prison and addressed him thus: "I beg of thee, as one who begs a servant of God, that thou wouldest pray for me and ask from the God whom thou worshippingest that He would forgive me the wrong I have done thee, and that He would make me worthy to enter into the palace which thou hast built for me, and that I may become a worshipper of the God whom thou preachest." Gad entreated the apostle in like manner, and both he and the king were converted (chs. 17 ff.).

Here we have the same conception of the redeemed life which meets us elsewhere in the Acts. It lies beyond this world, and for it men must make provision by acts of charity to the needy. Good deeds done to others secure for men a heavenly dwelling-place. The way of salvation is through renunciation and almsgiving.

In this estimate of the value of almsgiving for the person who practises it, the writer of the Acts is expressing the general feeling of the Church in the second century and afterwards.²⁶⁶ Deeds of beneficence were from the beginning one of the pronounced characteristics of Christianity. They flowed directly from the religious motive; their inspiration was due to the compassionate spirit of Christ and to the desire to serve Him in serving the needy and the distressed. We need not suppose that this religious motive in acts of pity was ever entirely

wanting, but as the legalistic spirit in the Church grew it certainly was rendered less pure through admixture with the idea of reward. The thought of reward as a motive for good deeds appeared early in Christian circles; we find it in 1 Timothy, where we read: "Charge them that are rich in this world . . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves right good treasure in the world to come, that they may secure the life which is life indeed" (vi. 17 ff.). In these words we find the *motif* of the story of the Heavenly Palace in the Acts of Thomas. Almsgiving is encouraged, not from the pure motive of Christian love, but by the inducement that it will win an eternal reward. In the *Didache* (ch. iv. 7) we find the same significant suggestion of recompense as a motive for generosity. "Thou shalt not hesitate to give, neither shalt thou murmur when giving; for thou shalt know who is the good paymaster of thy reward" (cf. 2 Clem. 11; Hermas, *Sim.* i. 5, vi. 1. 3, x. 4. 2). It was a perilous way on which the Church had entered, and the consequences in its later history were serious. It led to a practice of indiscriminate giving which was divorced from the Christian sentiment of compassion, and had alone in view the eternal blessedness of the giver which it was supposed to secure.

Great prominence is given to the Sacraments in the Acts of Thomas. The ascetic life was the condition without which everlasting blessedness could not be attained, but it was through the Sacraments that the way to life in the world of light was actually opened up. The author of the Acts shared the view common in the early Church, that baptism conferred forgiveness for the sins of the past, and perhaps we are right in saying that in conformity with prevailing views he conceived its efficacy, as well as that of the Eucharist, as magical and semi-physical

in character.²⁶⁷ Too much emphasis, however, should not be placed on this, for it is clear that in whatever way it was effected there was a real union with the Living Lord, through which protection from evil and the grace of a new life were bestowed. Doubtless, like his contemporaries, the writer of the Acts felt that after baptism a burden was laid on the Christian to keep the seal unstained, but he had less of the legalistic temper than some who believed that when baptism had taken place and past sins were cleansed, men were thrown on their own resources for the attainment of salvation. In the Acts of Thomas the sense of the presence of Christ is so real that, on the one hand, the efficacy of the Sacraments cannot be regarded as wholly magical, and, on the other, the responsibility of the believer is not a responsibility which he is left to bear alone. What gives meaning to the Sacraments is the presence of Christ realized by those who participate, and this is prominent in the Acts of Thomas, as we shall see when we quote from the prayers and addresses which formed part of the sacramental ritual.

The Acts of Thomas is extremely valuable for the very complete account which it gives of the ritual of the Sacraments in the Eastern Church. The convert to Christianity first of all received "the seal," which embraced the double ceremony of Anointing and Baptism ;²⁶⁸ and when the seal had been given, the Eucharist followed. Different parts of the body were anointed, the idea apparently being that by this means evil spirits were driven away. Baptism was by immersion, and in the Eucharist no wine was used, water taking its place. Sometimes there is no mention of the cup at all, the emphasis being entirely laid on the partaking of the bread. In two dedication prayers (chs. 27. 50) as given in the Greek translation there are unmistakable Gnostic expressions, but these are

less prominent in the form given in the Syriac text. The two versions of the prayer in ch. 27 are as follows :

GREEK.

Come, holy name of Christ, which
is above every name ;
Come, power of the Highest and
perfect compassion ;
Come, gift most high ;
Come, compassionate mother ;
Come, communion of the male ;
Come, revealer of secret mysteries ;
Come, mother of the seven houses,
that there may be rest for thee
in the eighth house ;
Come, thou ancient one of the five
members, intelligence, thought,
insight, reflexion, judgment ;
Communicate thyself to these
young persons !
Come, holy power of the spirit, and
purify their reins and their
hearts,
And seal them in the name of the
Father and of the Son and of the
Holy Ghost !

SYRIAC.

Come, holy name of Christ ;
Come, power of the Highest and
perfect compassion ;
Come, gift most high ;
Come, communion of the blessing ;
Come, revealer of secret mysteries ;
Come, mother of the seven houses,
who hast found rest in the eighth
house ;
Come, thou messenger of reconcilia-
tion ;
Communicate thyself to these young
persons !
Come, holy power of the spirit, and
purify their reins and their
hearts.
And he sealed them in the name
of the Father and of the Son and
of the Holy Ghost.²⁶⁹

In general the sacramental ritual described in the Acts of Thomas may be regarded as preserving many of the forms in common use in the service of the Syriac-speaking Church. As we gather by comparing different passages in the Acts, the full ritual was somewhat as follows. It opened with (1) *a dedication prayer* for those about to receive the seal. Of one such prayer the following is a part : “ Thou Comrade and Ally, Hope of the weak and Confidence of the poor, Refuge and Shelter of the weary . . . , who among men wast crucified for many, who with great might didst descend to the underworld, whose appearance the princes of death could not endure, . . . Son of Mercy sent in love to us from the upper and perfect

fatherland, Lord of undefiled possessions, who dost minister to Thy servants that they may live, . . . who dost satisfy thirsty souls with Thy benefits, be Thou with (these men and women) and gather them into Thy fold and unite them with Thy number ; be Thou their Guide in the land of error, their Physician in the land of sickness, their Rest in the land of the weary ; sanctify them in the impure country ; be the Physician of their bodies and souls ; make them to be Thy holy temples, and let Thy Holy Spirit dwell in them ” (ch. 156). After the opening prayer came (2) *an address of instruction* in the meaning of the seal. “ This baptism is forgiveness of sins. It is a light poured forth round about. It gives birth to the new man. . . . Praise be to Thee, Hidden Power, who art united to us through baptism. . . . Praise be to Thee, Spirit of Life, by whom those who are baptized, who take hold of Thee in love, are renewed ” (ch. 132). Next followed (3) *the prayer before the anointing*. “ Fruit, more beautiful than the other fruits, with which no other can be mixed, Thou who art beyond measure compassionate, who glowest through the power of the word, Might of the wood (the cross), through which men by putting it on overcome their enemies ; . . . Jesus, let Thy victorious power come and rest upon this oil as once it rested on the wood related to it ; . . . let the gift also come by which Thou didst blow at Thine enemies, so that they went backwards and fell down, and may it dwell in this oil over which we call Thy holy name ” (ch. 157). Then after (4) *laying on of hands* there came (5) *the outpouring of oil*, accompanied by these words : “ In Thy name, Jesus Christ, let it be to these people for forgiveness of sins and for the keeping away of the enemy and for the salvation of their souls ” (ch. 157). *Baptism by immersion* (6) came immediately after the Anointing, the formula in the extant texts at least being Trinitarian. The Eucharist was closely associated with Baptism. “ And when they came out

of the water, he took bread and cup, blessed and said"—*Eucharistic Prayer* (7): "We eat Thy holy body crucified for us, and we drink Thy blood shed for our redemption. May Thy body be to us for redemption and Thy blood for the forgiveness of sins. For the gall which Thou didst drink for our sakes, may the gall of the devil be taken away, and for the vinegar which Thou didst drink for us, may our weakness be made strong. . . . As Thou didst receive a crown of thorns for our sakes, may we who love Thee be crowned with an imperishable crown. For the linen in which Thou wast wrapped, may we be clothed with Thine invincible power; for the new tomb and burial may we receive renewal of the soul and of the body. As Thou didst rise again and revive, so may we rise again and live and stand before Thee in righteous judgment" (ch. 158). This prayer is noteworthy for its recalling the facts of the passion and resurrection; the Eucharist was a true feast of remembrance as well as of bestowal of spiritual gifts. *The Dispensing of the Bread* (8) is accompanied by the words: "May this Eucharist be for your salvation and joy and the healing of your souls!" (ch. 158); or, "This shall be to you for remission of sins and everlasting resurrection" (ch. 50). *The Partaking of the Cup* (9) is referred to only twice, it being definitely stated in one of the passages (ch. 121) that it was a cup of water.

Besides the prayers and addresses which form so large a part of the Acts of Thomas, there are included in the book two hymns which, in their rich Oriental imagery and exquisite poetic quality, are the finest literary products of the Syriac-speaking Church. The former of the two is a *Bridal Ode* (chs. 6. 7) sung by the apostle at the wedding of a royal princess—a mystic hymn, the subject of which is generally taken to be the marriage of the soul to Christ.²⁷⁰ We have already noted the fact that the only true marriage recognized by a repre-

sentative teacher of the Church in the East was marriage with the Heavenly Bridegroom, and the ode which the apostle sang has a fitting place in the narrative which closes with the renunciation by the royal bridal pair of the married life and their consecration to Jesus Christ. Attempts to explain the imagery of the hymn from Gnostic mythology are not particularly illuminating; apart from some details which are dark, the ode is intelligible as describing in language which recalls the Song of Songs the beauty of the soul which has turned from all earthly joys and looks forward to the perfect union with Christ in the kingdom of light. The translation of the ode here given is the result of a comparison of the Syriac and Greek versions, and must be regarded in many of its details as only an approximation to the original.²⁷¹

“ My bride is a daughter of the light ;
 She has the dazzling splendour of kings.
 Proud and charming is her countenance,
 Adorned with a pure grace and beauty.
 Her garments are like flowers of spring
 Whose odour is fragrant and pleasant.
 On the crown of her head the king is throned
 And nourishes her pillar beneath.
 She sets truth on her head
 And stirs up joy in her feet.
 Her mouth is opened and that right fitly,
 Since with it she sings only songs of praise.
 Thirty-two are they who glorify her (?).
 Her tongue is the door curtain
 Drawn back for those who enter.
 Her neck is a staircase
 Which the first creator built.
 Her two hands proclaim the place of the living ;
 Her fingers open the gates of the city.
 Her bridal chamber is bright,
 Scented with balsam and all kinds of perfume,
 Sending forth sweet odours of myrrh and of herbs
 And of all manner of sweet-smelling flowers.
 Within are strewn branches of myrtle ;
 The gates are adorned with reeds.

Her groomsmen surround her,
All whom she has chosen ;
And her bridesmaids with them
Sing praises before her.
Living ones serve in her presence
And look for the bridegroom's coming,
That they may be illumined by his glory
And with him attain his kingdom which never passes away,
And sit down at the wedding
To which all the righteous shall come,
And attain to the bliss
Into which they singly will enter ;
And that they may put on garments of light
And be clothed with the glory of their Lord,
And praise the living Father
Because they have received the glorious light
And have been illumined by the brightness of their Lord,
And have received his food
Whose abundance never fails,
And have drunk of the living (water)
Which makes them neither crave nor thirst.
Praise the Father the Lord and the only-begotten Son,
And give thanks to the Spirit as his wisdom."

As a parallel to the thought of this Bridal Hymn we may quote a passage from Aphraates : " All the pure virgins that have been betrothed to the Messiah, there they light their torches, and with the Bridegroom do they enter the marriage chamber. . . . The wedding feast of the daughters of Eve is for seven days, but theirs is the Bridegroom that doth not withdraw for ever. The adornment of the daughters of Eve is wool that wears out and perishes, but theirs is clothing that doth not wear out. The beauty of the daughters of Eve, old age doth wither it, but their beauty in the time of the resurrection is renewed." ²⁷²
It should be noted that mystical marriage in the New Testament refers only to the union between Christ and the *Church* (2 Cor. xi. 2 ; Eph. v. 23 ff. ; Rev. xix. 7, xxi. 9 ff.). This is in harmony with the Hebrew conception of God as the Bridegroom of His people Israel (Hos. ii. 16 ; Isa. liv. 6 ; Ezek. xvi.

7 ff.). Tertullian seems to have been the first, so far as the evidence enables us to judge, to give the name "bride of Christ" to individuals who had chosen the life of virginity (*De virg. vel.* 16: as virgins "ye are wedded to Christ; to Him ye have surrendered your flesh; to Him ye have espoused your maturity. Walk in accordance with the will of your Espoused.").

The second and longer hymn, the celebrated *Hymn of the Soul*, which by universal consent is regarded as the most beautiful piece of literature produced by the early Church,²⁷³ has not the same close attachment to the narrative of the Acts as the Bridal Ode. Nowhere in the narrative, before or after it, is there the slightest allusion to the subject of the poem, which accordingly must be regarded as having been derived from another source and inserted by the author of the book or (less probably) by some later editor, not because it had any special relevance to the context, but because it was so beautiful in thought and expression that it was considered worthy of being placed in the mouth of the apostle. The authorship of the hymn has by many been conjecturally assigned to Bardaisan or to one of his associates, and this ascription has been urged by Professor A. A. Bevan on the following grounds: ²⁷⁴ "Ephræm's accusations against Bardesanes fall under three principal heads—(1) that he denied the resurrection, and regarded the separation of the soul from the body as a blessing; (2) that he held the theory of a Divine 'Mother' who in conjunction with the 'Father of Life' gave birth to a being called 'the Son of the Living'; (3) that he believed in a number of lesser 'gods,' that is to say, eternal beings subordinate to the supreme God. . . . It is remarkable that these three 'heresies' all appear distinctly in the poem before us. . . . In addition to these ideas we find others which are not expressly ascribed to Bardesanes, but are nevertheless perfectly consistent

with what we know of him. Thus the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence (*ἀνάμνησις*), which is expressed with such distinctness in the poem . . . can hardly have been unknown to Bardesanes, who, according to Epiphanius, was skilled in Greek as well as in Syriac." These arguments seemed to have such force that Professor Burkitt, writing in 1904, said of the Hymn : ²⁷⁵ " We may indulge the pleasing fancy that it was the work of Bardaisan himself or of his son Harmonius," who is known to have been a writer of hymns. Study of the recently published " Prose Refutations " of Ephraim has, however, convinced Burkitt that Bardaisan was not a poet, and that the *Hymn of the Soul* was not written by him or by any member of his school.

Burkitt's arguments may be summarized as follows : (1) The denial of the bodily resurrection was a doctrine widely held in early Christian circles ; (2) there is little to connect the theory of a divine " Mother " charged against Bardaisan (Ephraim's Works, Roman edition, ii. 557) with the " Queen of the East " in the hymn ; (3) the eternal beings subordinate to the supreme God in which Bardaisan believed have nothing in common with the " Nobles " in the poem who formed the celestial hierarchy ; ²⁷⁶ (4) there is an " entire absence of the mythic and poetic element " in Ephraim's quotations from Bardaisan, who in the *Refutations* " appears as a matter-of-fact man of science " in whose teaching " there is no parabolic setting-forth of the meaning of human life or the ways of Divine redemption " ; (5) the ascetic philosophy of life which is characteristic of the Hymn and of the Acts of Thomas as a whole is alien to Bardaisan's view of things. To this may be added (6) the serious doubt as to Bardaisan's first-hand knowledge of Greek philosophical literature. ²⁷⁷

I think it must be allowed that these considerations render the theory of Bardaisan's connexion with the Hymn highly

improbable. Some of them taken singly do not carry us very far, but their cumulative effect is impressive, and, in particular, the difference between Bardaisan's view of life and that suggested in the Hymn seems to be practically decisive against associating the Hymn with the Bardesanist school. We are not so well informed about Bardaisan's general outlook on things as we could wish to be, but he certainly was not an ascetic as regards marriage, and the sanity of his teaching in *De Fato* shows that he did not look on earthly interests as unworthy of the human soul.

The *Hymn of the Soul* is an allegory,²⁷⁸ the general scope of which is, excepting the questionable use of the word "Gnostic," admirably outlined as follows by Nöldeke: "It is a genuine Gnostic hymn about the soul which, of heavenly origin, is sent to the earth, and forgets its mission until it is awakened by a revelation from on high. It then performs the task assigned to it (namely, to secure the pearl which was guarded by the serpent) and returns to the upper regions where it finds again the heavenly robe, its ideal counterpart, and reaches the presence of the highest powers of heaven."²⁷⁹

With this clue to the meaning of the poem we may give some of its verses, quoting by the kind permission of Professor Burkitt from his fine translation which appeared first in *Early Eastern Christianity*, 218 ff., and later in a revised form in *The Quest*, v. 4 (July 1914). It is the soul which speaks.

"When I was yet but a little child in the House of my Father,
Brought up in luxury, well content with the life of the Palace,
Far from the East our home my Parents sent me to travel,
And from the royal Hoard they prepared me a load for the journey,
Precious it was yet light, that alone I carried the burden.

Median gold it contained and silver from Atropatene,
Garnet and ruby from Hindostan and Bactrian agate,
Adamant harness was girded upon me stronger than iron;
But they took off the Robe wherewith their love had adorned me,
And the bright Mantle woven of scarlet and wrought to my stature.

For they decreed and wrote on my heart that I should not forget it:
' If thou go down and bring from Egypt the Pearl, the unique one,
Guarded there in the Sea that holds the all-swallowing Serpent,
Thou shalt be clothed again with thy Robe and the Mantle of
Scarlet,
And with thy Brother, the Prince, thou shalt inherit our Kingdom.' "

The young prince journeyed to Egypt, and settled near the abode of the serpent, clothing himself in the dress of the natives to avoid recognition. He was, however, discovered to be a stranger and was fed by guile on the unclean food of Egypt.

" Thus I forgot my race and I served the King of the country,
Nay, I forgot the Pearl for which my Parents had sent me,
While from their poisonous food I sank into slumber unconscious."

The evil fate of the prince was known in his Eastern home ; a council was held, and a letter was dispatched to effect his deliverance.

" " From thy Father, the King of Kings,—from the Queen thy Mother,—
And from thy Brother,—to thee, our Son in Egypt, be greeting !
Up and arise from sleep, and hear the words of our Letter !
Thou art a son of Kings : by whom art thou held in bondage ?
Think of the Pearl for which thou wast sent to sojourn in Egypt.

Think of thy shining Robe and remember thy glorious Mantle ;
These thou shalt wear when thy name is enrolled in the list of the
valiant,

And with thy Brother Viceroy shalt thou be in our Kingdom.'

This was my Letter, sealed with the King's own seal on the cover,
Lest it should fall in the hands of the fierce Babylonian demons."

On receipt of the letter the prince started from his dangerous slumber, and remembering his royal descent and the mission on which he had come, he charmed the serpent and seized the pearl and set out for home.

" Quickly I seized the pearl and homewards started to journey,
Leaving the unclean garb I had worn in Egypt behind me ;
Straight for the East I set my course, to the light of the home-
land,

And on the way in front I found the Letter that roused me—
Once it awakened me, now it became a light on my pathway."

When the prince reached the borders of his home-country, the robe which he had put off when he departed for Egypt was sent to him.

“What I had worn of old, my Robe and the Mantle of scarlet,
Thither my Parents sent from the far Hyrcanian mountains,
Brought by the hands of the faithful warders who had it in keep-
ing;
I was a child when I left it nor could its fashion remember,
But when I looked, the Robe had received my form and my likeness.”

The robe sparkling with gems bore the image of the King of Kings, and during the absence of the prince it had grown with the growth of his stature. Now the time had come for him to resume it.

“All the while with a kingly mien my Robe was advancing,
Flowing towards me as if impatient with those who had brought it;
I too longed for it, ran to it, grasped it, put it upon me.
Once again I was clothed in my Robe and adorned with its beauty,
And the bright-gleaming Mantle again was gathered about me.

Clad in my Robe I betook me up to the Gate of the Palace,
Homage I paid to my Father's Viceroy for his protection;
I had performed his behest and he had fulfilled what he promised.
So in the Satraps' Court I joined the throng of his Chieftains,
And he received me with favour to be with him in his Kingdom,
All his servants rejoicing that he had preserved me in safety.
Now to the King of Kings one day he has promised to take me,
There by his side with my gift and my Pearl I shall stand in the
Presence.”

The beauty of this ancient hymn no one will question, and it is as genuinely Christian as it is beautiful. Save for the conception of Deity as Father, Mother, and Son, which, strange as it may seem to us, was a familiar conception in the Syriac-speaking Church,²⁸⁰ there is almost nothing in the allegory which is in the slightest degree repugnant to universal Christian feeling. This being so, it is difficult to understand the remark of Lipsius when he says: “The preservation of this precious remnant of Gnostic poetry we owe to the fortunate

ignorance of the Catholic redactor who had no idea what heretical serpent lurked beneath the beautiful flowers of the poem.”²⁸¹ The serpent certainly is well concealed ; one searches for it in vain. How fully the thought of the hymn is in harmony with catholic sentiment is clearly seen in the interpretation given by Niceta, archbishop of Thessalonica, about the middle of the eleventh century. After paraphrasing the poem, Niceta thus comments on it (the passage is taken from a note in Burkitt’s book, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 227): “ Thus, if I have rightly gauged the meaning of these parabolic words, the inspired apostle clearly indicates in his description the fair origin of our race in the image of God, the incorruptible wealth of graces thence derived, the spiritual armour wherewith we are furnished for the fight against those who are spiritually called Egyptians, and against the Old Serpent, their leader and champion. We see their plots, their wiles, their charms, the inevitable fall of those who trust in them, the consequent waste of divine wealth, the lingering taint of sins, shadowed forth in the poem by sleep and torpor ; then the compassion from on high, the help afforded by the Holy Scriptures as if by a letter, after the arrival of which comes the turn, the awakening, the enlightenment through baptism, whereby we receive the precious pearl. And, in addition to all this, we see the rejoicing which our God and Father and the Divine Powers around Him make at the return and the recall of them that have fallen, and finally the safe arrival of those eternal rewards which God has prepared for those who wholly turn unto Him. Strengthening by these words the timid and doubtful disposition of our souls, and teaching us how by means of them we are to lead a new life, dead as we have become in sins, the Apostle Thomas left an eternal consolation not only for those then in the prison, but also for all faint-hearted souls throughout the ages.” That such an interpretation, so natural and unforced and so com-

pletely in harmony with the catholic faith, could have been given eight hundred years after the poem was written, is in my judgment convincing proof that we have in it no strange Gnostic theorizing, but a conception of the fortunes of a human soul which is simply Christian.

One detail of the imagery of the poem which calls for special notice is the Heavenly Robe. The soul, while still in the upper world of light, is thought of as being clothed with a shining form which is left behind when the soul enters the world and assumes a physical body. This celestial form is conceived as a personal being which lives in sympathy with the soul in its earthly experiences. As the soul grows in stature under the discipline of this world, so does the heavenly garment grow; then at length, when the soul has completed its discipline on earth and been made fit for the heavenly kingdom (the securing of the pearl),²⁸² it casts off the temporary vesture of the flesh and returns to the upper world and is once more clothed with its robe of light. One may compare with this conception of a spiritual counterpart to the incarnate soul the doctrine of "the angels" of men who always behold the face of the Heavenly Father (Matt. xviii. 10).²⁸³ The bright form, conceived as a garment which awaits the redeemed in the spiritual world, is a familiar image in the Book of Revelation, as, for example, when we read: "he that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment" (iii. 5); "after this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude . . . stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes" (vii. 9). What is meant is the spiritual bodies given to the saints when they are set free from the conflicts of earth. St. Paul has a similar thought when he expresses the yearning to be "clothed upon with the house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. v. 2). His conception of a spiritual body (1 Cor. xv. 44), and of the transformation of this body of our humiliation

into the likeness of Christ's body of glory (Phil. iii. 21), belongs to the same order of ideas. In the apocalypses of pre-Christian Judaism the resurrection bodies of the righteous are described as "garments of glory" (1 Enoch lxii. 16; 2 Enoch xxii. 8). So in the Christian apocalypse, the *Ascension of Isaiah* (ch. iv. 16), we read: "The saints will come with the Lord with their garments which are (now) stored up on high in the seventh heaven; . . . and He will clothe the saints who have been found in the body with the garments of the saints."²⁸⁴

It has so far been assumed that the hymn is rightly described as "the Hymn of the Soul." That is the general view, but there are scholars who interpret it as referring to the Saviour. Liechtenhan was the first to express this opinion in 1902: "the hymn describes the descent, the *kenosis* and incarnation of the Soter, his deliverance of the pneumatic soul (the pearl) from matter and evil powers, and his return to heaven."²⁸⁵ This view was worked out in detail by Preuschen in his book *Zwei Gnostische Hymnen*, and the hymn as a whole is described by him as "a Gnostic embellishment and expansion of Phil. ii. 5-11." The theory at the first sight is attractive and for the most part does no violence to the details of the allegory, but it breaks down at two crucial points. As we have already seen, Deity is represented in the allegory by the Father the King of Kings, the Mother the Queen of the East, and the Brother next to them in the kingdom. In a Christian writing the Brother in this Trinity can be understood only as Christ. How, then, can the prince who is sent into Egypt and is destined to share the government with the Brother be the Saviour? Preuschen's attempts to get rid of this difficulty are extremely far-fetched and utterly unconvincing. Equally damaging to the theory is the guilty slumber into which the prince fell when he partook of the unclean food of the Egyptians and served their king. Reitzenstein, who shares Preuschen's view, endeavours to

account for this inharmonious detail in Christ's life on earth by suggesting an influence of pagan literature which he nevertheless admits to be almost unintelligible; ²⁸⁶ while Preuschen himself, who is keenly conscious of the difficulty, attempts to explain the detail as a possible development of the evangelic story of the Temptation. "As Jesus hungers, the tempter comes in order that he may induce Him to eat. Something of this kind may have been before the mind of the author of the poem." ²⁸⁷ The explanation does not help matters; in the Gospel Jesus is tempted and does not eat, in the poem the prince is tempted and does. One cannot call this "developing a story." The fact is that the prince's sleepy forgetfulness and his service of the king of Egypt are fatal to the interpretation of the poem as a Hymn of the Saviour. ²⁸⁸ That the theory in other respects is plausible is accounted for when we remember that the conception of a descending and ascending Saviour was a reduplication of the popular belief respecting the life-history of the human soul. ²⁸⁹ As the soul came down from the upper world of light and entered the world and then returned to its true home when it had been freed from its entanglement in an evil world, so the Heavenly Christ descended in order that He might reascend and open up the way for the souls which He had enlightened.

Although the poem has a very loose attachment to the narrative and may indeed be removed without leaving a scar, the conception of the world and of everything in it is in complete harmony with the teaching of the Acts. In some sense life on earth is seen to be a divine discipline, for the soul is sent into the world by God; but that discipline consists not in the soul's wise use of temporal things, but in its complete detachment from them. To give oneself to worldly interests is to eat of the unclean food of Egypt and to forget one's heavenly origin and calling, and a return to the world of light from which the

soul came is possible only when perfect purity is won through the renunciation of worldly desires and joys. Deliverance for the soul that has fallen into an earthly stupor is due to a divine revelation, which succeeds in awaking the soul to a recollection of its true nature and mission. That the poet under the image of the letter had any thought of suggesting the idea of the incarnate Word of God, it would be hazardous to assume ; but in any case the divine message is good news to the soul sunk in its earth-dream, for it arouses it to a sense of its divine quest and inspires it to win the pearl of purity and fitness for the heavenly kingdom. The Christian life is thus exhibited as due to an act of divine grace (and grace persists to the end until the soul reaches the upper world of light), but it is also viewed as an adventure not easily to be carried through, for holiness is achieved only through renouncing the world and mastering the vigilant Serpent. Making due allowance for the negative attitude to the concerns of the world, we find ourselves in an entirely Christian atmosphere ; and as for the ideal of unworldliness, we are readier to condemn it than to appreciate its significance as a protest against a view of life in which God and the soul are of no account and the world is everything. We have certainly attained a juster conception of Christianity than the author of the Acts of Thomas ever had ; we have learned that a place is given us amid earthly conditions, not to reject the joys and tasks which spring from them, but to redeem them from the evil with which they are so often associated ; that is a great and inspiring calling, but one not without its perils ; and in view of the perils of it, for very easily the soul may fall under the deadening spell of worldly desire, we shall do well to remember that there is a permanent truth at the heart of the ascetic ideal, the truth that the salvation of the soul is a supreme human concern and that the world is nothing if the soul be starved. We may judge that Christian men and women in

early days were mistaken in fleeing from the tasks and pleasures and social duties of the world, although in fairness to them we should seek to realize the condition of the world from which they fled ; they were mistaken, for it was in the midst of secular interests and abounding evil that they were called to live the life of the spirit ; nevertheless, if we have come to see more truly, we should not withhold our admiration for those who, however mistakenly, in a world where the most sacred things were deeply stained by sin, mortified their natural desires that they might bear witness to the supremacy of spiritual values.

NOTES.

¹ *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, p. vii.

² On the other hand, with curious perversity and with a display of crass ignorance as to the way in which the New Testament canon came into existence, Hone in his worthless book, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, first published in 1820, aimed at disparaging the authority of the canonical books by maintaining that those included in his collection had substantially equal claims to acceptance on the ground of the veneration in which they were held in the primitive Church, and that they had been rejected by an arbitrary decision of the Nicene Council.

³ *Early Church History*, i. 99.

⁴ *Dialogues of Plato*, iii. 524.

⁵ The passage to which Eusebius evidently refers is quoted by Irenæus (*Hæc.* v. 33) and bears on the face of it a worthless character as a reputed saying of our Lord. "The days will come in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand branches, and on each branch again ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand clusters, and on each cluster ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed shall yield five and twenty measures of wine. And when any of the saints shall have taken hold of one of their clusters, another shall cry, I am a better cluster; take me, bless the Lord through me. Likewise also a grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand heads, and every head shall have ten thousand grains, and every grain ten pounds of fine flour, bright and clean, and the other fruits, seeds, and the grass shall produce in similar proportions, and all the animals using these fruits which are products of the soil shall become in their turn peaceable and harmonious, obedient to man in all subjection." That this passage was accepted as an

utterance of our Lord by Papias and Irenæus is a clear proof of the indiscriminating temper prevalent in the second century. As is now known, the wonderful story was derived from Jewish apocalypse, and is found with varying details in the Apocalypse of Baruch (ch. xxix. 5) and the Book of Enoch (ch. x. 19).

⁶ E. F. Scott, *The New Testament To-day*, 47.

⁷ Hatch, *Hibbert Lectures*, 5.

⁸ *Studien und Kritiken*, 1912, p. 50.

⁹ See on the whole question, H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*. Dr. Kennedy may perhaps slightly underestimate the apostle's debt to pagan thought, but his general conclusion seems to me to be entirely sound. "In St. Paul we are confronted, not with one of those natures which is content to be the medium of the spiritual forces of its environment, but with a personality which has been shaped once for all in the throes of a tremendous crisis, and thenceforward transforms every influence to which it is sensitive with the freedom born of a triumphant faith" (p. 299). On the other hand, the defect of Dr. Morgan's extremely able and penetrating study, *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, is that the influence of Hellenistic thought is overstated, and that too little emphasis is laid on the originality of the apostle in giving a new and Christian value to that which he borrowed.

¹⁰ Heathen practices were adopted by the Church in "the desire to quicken the evangelization of the world. Good and intelligent men like Gregory Thaumaturgus, the pupil of Origen, sanctioned practices of which they did not approve, in order to make it easier for the heathen to come over, and the ignorant undisciplined converts thus acquired sensibly lowered the tone of the whole community" (Bigg, *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, 84). See also Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, i. 398, ii. 206 ff.

¹¹ Hogg, *Redemption from this World*, 29 f.

¹² *Miracles and Christianity*, 40.

¹³ Of second-century writers, Ignatius perhaps comes nearest to understanding the vital conception of faith (see, especially, *Ephes.* 14. 1; *Magn.* 1. 2); but even he is not free from a tincture of legalism.

¹⁴ Hoennicke, *Das Judenchristentum*, 345.

¹⁵ *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, 273.

¹⁶ Clutton-Brock, *Studies in Christianity*, 72.

¹⁷ *World Miss. Conf. Reports*, 1910, iv. 256.

¹⁸ *Contra Celsum*, ii. 66 : "Be not surprised if all the multitudes who have believed on Jesus do not behold His resurrection, when Paul, writing to the Corinthians, can say to them, *as being incapable of receiving greater matters*, For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." With reference to the statement above that the σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ was overcome only when Christians learned to see in it a decree of God whose fulfilment was foretold in the Old Testament, it should be said that, although this implied a distinct falling away from the consciousness which St. Paul had of the central and essential worth of Christ's sufferings for the salvation of men, it must not be taken as meaning that second-century Christians attached no saving significance to the Cross. One passage in Justin (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 137) is evidence that this was not so. "Do not speak evil, my brothers, of Him who was crucified, nor pour scorn on the stripes wherewith all may be healed, even as we have been healed."

¹⁹ The Church owes to the Fourth Gospel "the establishment of the real historical personality of Jesus Christ and of Christianity as a morally effective religion. That sounds almost paradoxical; we are so much accustomed to regard the Gospel of John as the πνευματικὸν εὐαγγέλιον, in which are to be found the beginnings of Christian speculation and mysticism. . . . And certainly, when we compare the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptics only, we get this impression. As, however, it is a fundamental rule of all historical interpretation to grasp the meaning of every work from its own *milieu*, we must bring forward for comparison the Docetism which at that time was prevalent in Asia Minor, the Logos-speculation of Alexandrian philosophy and Hellenistic mysticism. Then we shall recognize that it is in fact the undying merit of the Fourth Gospel that it set firmly on the earth the picture of Christ which was in danger of disappearing in the smoke of mere appearance" (von Dobschütz, *Probleme des apostolischen Zeitalters*, 93 f.).

²⁰ *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, 287.

²¹ Early ecclesiastical writers took the view, wrongly, that St. Luke in his preface meant to cast reflexions on the qualifica-

tions of his predecessors. Thus Origen wrote (*Hom. in Luc.* 1. 1): "This expression, 'they have taken in hand,' contains a hidden accusation of those who without the grace of the Holy Spirit leapt forward to write Gospels. Certainly Matthew and Mark and John and Luke did not 'take in hand' to write, but full of the Holy Spirit they wrote Gospels." Similarly Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 24. 15) says: "Luke himself also in beginning the work that bears his name states the reason for his making the composition, showing clearly that while many others had rather rashly undertaken to give an account of the things of which he himself was fully assured . . . he had delivered to us through his own Gospel the reliable account of the things which he was convinced to be true, aided by his continued and intimate fellowship with Paul and by his intercourse with the rest of the apostles."

²² Von Dobschütz in an article, "Gibt es ein doppeltes Evangelium im Neuen Testament?" (*Studien und Kritiken*, 1912, 331 ff.) writes as follows: "I consider it a serious aberration towards Gnosis when R. Seeberg lately spoke of an *Evangelium quadraginta dierum*, and from that, that is, from revelations of the Risen One to His disciples, would derive everything which seems to be new in the apostolic preaching as compared with the preaching of Jesus. That opens the way completely for the Gnostic secret tradition and leaves room for the inflowing of entirely foreign elements. We have a vital interest in *not* separating the revelations of the Risen Lord as well as of the Spirit from the preaching of Jesus before His death, as it is expressed in the Paraclete promises of the Fourth Gospel: 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you' (John xiv. 26), and 'He shall take of mine' (John xvi. 14)."

²³ *Historic View of the New Testament*, 205.

²⁴ "Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den Judenchristlichen Evangelien," *TU*, 1911, xxxvii. 1.

²⁵ "Das Evangelium der zwölf Apostel," in *Zeitschrift f. neutestamentl. Wissenschaft*, Bd. 13 (1912), pp. 338 ff.; Bd. 14 (1913), pp. 38 ff., 117 ff.

²⁶ When the controversy about the Law died down, it was this difference among Jewish Christians which was chiefly noted by Church writers. Thus Origen in the middle of the third century

recognized two groups of Ebionites, distinguished, not by their divergent views about the Law, but by their Christological opinions. "There are two kinds of Ebionites (he says), the one like us confessing Jesus to have been born of a virgin, the other maintaining that He was not so born, but that He was born as other men" (c. *Cels.* v. 61). So Eusebius, *H.E.* iii. 27. The name "Ebionites" as applied to Jewish Christians is first mentioned by Irenæus (*Hær.* i. 26), who, however, recognizes no different parties among them.

²⁷ *Hær.* 30. 13: "At any rate in the Gospel current among them, entitled "according to Matthew," not, however, in a perfectly complete state, but falsified and mutilated—they call it the Hebrew Gospel—it is related . . ." On the other hand, Epiphanius states that the Nazoræans "have the Gospel according to Matthew most complete in Hebrew" (*Hær.* 29. 9).

²⁸ *ZNTW*, vol. xiv. p. 38.

²⁹ So far as I am aware, Schmidtke stands alone in refusing to equate the Ebionite Gospel and the Gospel of the Twelve. The latter Gospel he believes to have been current among Syrian Gnostics—the Kokaje—who were influenced by Parseeism.

³⁰ *De Principiis*, iv. 22: "Now, if the statements made to us regarding Israel and its tribes and families are calculated to impress us, when the Saviour says, 'I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' we do not understand the expression as the Ebionites do, who are poor in understanding (for they derive their name from the poverty of their intellect, Ebion signifying 'poor' in Hebrew), so as to suppose that the Saviour came specially to the 'carnal' Israelites." (It need hardly be said that Origen is wrong in his explanation of the meaning of the name "Ebionites." It was an early name—אֲבִיּוֹנִים, the poor—probably assumed by Jewish Christians, partly with reference to their outward condition and partly through their sense of unity with the pious in Israel who in the Old Testament were often so called.)

³¹ Tatian, who was also a vegetarian, mentions in the *Diatessaron* that John's food was "milk and mountain-honey." At a later time orthodox Syrians changed the "locusts" of the canonical text into all sorts of vegetables. See Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, 102.

³² Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber*, 12.

³³ It should be further noted that the name of the *Sea of Galilee* (so named in Matt. iv. 18, xv. 29 : Mark i. 16, vii. 31) is given in the Gospel of the Ebionites as the *Lake of Tiberias* (II.). The word "lake" applied to the Sea of Galilee is found in the New Testament only in Luke v. 1, viii. 22, 23, 33, while "the Sea of *Tiberias*" is Johannine (John vi. 1, xxi. 1). But we should not be entitled to argue from these similarities alone to the use of the Third and Fourth Gospels by the author of the Ebionite Gospel. There is nothing else in the fragments to raise the question of the use of the Fourth Gospel. The name "Lake of Tiberias" was probably in common use ; it is given in Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* iii. 37, iv. 456.

³⁴ The author doubtless had in mind Num. xi. 8, where it is said of manna in the LXX : "the pleasure of it was like a cake made from oil in taste" (ὥσεί γένυμα ἐγκρίς ἐξ ἐλαίου).

³⁵ This change aroused the indignation of Epiphanius, who wrote in reference to it : "How is it possible that their fraud should not be detected, when the context cries out that the μ and the η have been added ?" (*Hær.* 30. 22).

³⁶ A discussion of the tradition will be found in Bauer, *op. cit.* 134 ff. Passages other than those mentioned above, in which the light or fire at the baptism of Jesus is referred to, are given in Resch, *Agrapha*, 357 f.

³⁷ § 155 D.

³⁸ See Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 189 ff.

³⁹ The passage is found in Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 177. Theodore's criticism of the Gospel was based on the fact that the Pelagians derived from its account of the baptism of Jesus support for their view that men are led into sin, not by their will, but by their nature (φύσει καὶ οὐ γνώμῃ πταίειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους).

⁴⁰ The introduction of Apollinaris as a sort of *deus ex machina* to make everything clear is the most novel and least convincing detail of Schmidke's argument. Everything which he is disposed to accept in Jerome or in Epiphanius about the Nazarenes or their Gospel is derived from Apollinaris.

⁴¹ The theory that the Oxyrhynchus sayings are extracts from the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" has been urged most recently (1920) by Hugh G. Evelyn White in his book on *The Sayings*

of *Jesus from Oxyrhynchus*, pp. liv ff. Mr. White, however, had not Schmidtke's investigations in hand when he wrote, and his argument, based on the assumption that the Alexandrian Gospel and the Nazarene Gospel were the same, must lose all weight with those who believe that they were different. But the argument, although to my mind not conclusive, is worthy of serious consideration by those who accept the view that the two Gospels had much matter in common, and may have been different editions of the same work.

⁴² The saying is understood by some to refer to the Transfiguration; but that is rendered extremely unlikely by the fact that the incident is narrated by Jesus, presumably to His disciples, as something which was unknown to them. If the words describe an experience of Jesus reported in the canonical Gospels, they can refer only to the Temptation.

⁴³ Meyer in Hennecke, *NTA*, ii. 28.

⁴⁴ Adeney, *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1904, pp. 152 f.

⁴⁵ *Ep. ad Damasum, De Seraphin et Calculo*, Martianay's edition, iii. 523: quoted by Nicholson, *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, p. 80.

⁴⁶ Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 89.

⁴⁷ As Swete has said, the word θαμβεῖσθαι (to be astonished) "indicates with precision the rush of mingled fear and joy which ought to follow the great εὐρηκα" (*Expository Times*, Aug. 1904, p. 491).

⁴⁸ "Rest in the heavenly kingdom" is the characteristic description of salvation in the *Epistola Apostolorum* (see Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 308 ff.).

⁴⁹ *Hær.* 29. 7: ἔστι δὲ αὕτη ἡ αἵρεσις ἡ Ναζωραίων ἐν τῇ Βεροιαίων περὶ τὴν Κοίλην Συρίαν.

⁵⁰ Speaking of the Nazarenes he says (*Ep.* 112. 13 *ad August.*): "usque hodie per totas Orientis synagogas inter Judæos hæresis est."

⁵¹ Schmidtke's view of the rise of this tradition is that canonical Matthew was translated into Aramaic in the early years of the second century, and that this version had the good fortune to win the reputation of originality. This opinion was accepted by Papias, who recorded it in his well-known words preserved by Eusebius

(*H.E.* iii. 39. 16): "Matthew composed the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each interpreted them as he was able." Through Papias' influence this became the common opinion of the ancient Church. Nicholson, although taking a different view, regarded it as a possible theory that "the Greek Matthew had been translated into Aramaic, and that Papias mistook this translation for an original" (*Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 107 n.).

⁵² I have not thought it necessary to enter on any discussion of earlier views of the relation of the Nazarene Gospel to those in the canon. The Gospel, as it seems to me, reveals so clearly its secondary character that it is not possible to maintain either that it was the groundwork of canonical Matthew or that it was a writing independent of the Synoptics, based on oral tradition.

⁵³ As Schmidtke points out, the scholiast, who evidently considered the Greek text of St. Matthew a translation from the Jewish-Christian Gospel written originally in Hebrew, added marginal notes from τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν, just as the Hexaplar MSS. of the Septuagint have marginal notes Ἑβραϊκόν.

⁵⁴ A. B. Bruce, *Expos. Greek Testament*, i. 85. It should be noted that the Fourth Gospel omits the Baptism altogether.

⁵⁵ The Baptism caused no difficulty to heretics. Manes asked the question: "Did Christ therefore sin, because He was baptized?" (*Acts of Archelus*, 60), and the answer was not doubtful. He had sinned. According to the pseudo-Cyprianic *De Rebaptismate*, 17, this view was expressed in the *Preaching of Paul* (in quo libro contra omnes scripturas et de peccato proprio confitentem invenies Christum, qui solus omnino nihil deliquit).

⁵⁶ In his article "Jesus Christ" (Hastings, *DB.* ii. 611) Sanday emphasized the self-consecration of Jesus to the work of His life as the meaning of His submission to baptism. "In a general movement which embraced all the more earnest-minded in the nation, it was right that He, too, should share. It would not follow that the symbolical act of Baptism should have precisely the same significance for every one that submitted to it. For the main body it denoted a break with a sinful past and a new start upon a reformed life. For the Messiah it denoted a break simply, the entrance upon a new phase in the accomplishment of His mission. . . . The significance of Baptism in His case was positive rather than negative."

⁵⁷ The earliest instance of this explanation is in Ignatius, who writes (*Ephes.* 18): "He was baptized that by His experience (πάθει) He might cleanse the water."

⁵⁸ *Reden und Sprüche Jesu*, 216. It is also noteworthy that the *Epistola Apostolorum*, in reviewing the incidents in the life of Jesus which formed the substance of the apostolic preaching, omits the Baptism (Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 298).

⁵⁹ Augustine, *contra Julianum*, iv. 88. It seems to have been from the same passage in the Gospel of the Nazarenes that the *Preaching of Paul* derived the view that Christ had made confession of sin ("In that book—the *Preaching of Paul*—against all the Scriptures you will find Christ . . . confessing His own sin, and driven almost unwillingly by His mother to accept the baptism of John"; ps.-Cyprian, *De Rebaptismate*, 17).

⁶⁰ Harnack, *Chronologie*, i. 648.

⁶¹ See Zahn, *Gesch. d. NT Kanons*, ii. 689.

⁶² This would be a certainty, if a gloss on Matt. ii. 21 and two scraped out glosses on Matt. i. 6 and Matt. i. 20 f. which are found in the minuscule MS. δ 30 are, as Schmidtke believes, derived from τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν.

⁶³ Denney in Hastings, *DCG*, i. 736.

⁶⁴ The reading in Jerome's text gives the meaning, "from that hour in which he (James) had drunk the cup of the Lord"—a reference to the Last Supper at which James is thus reported to have been present. Were this the correct reading, the Gospel of the Nazarenes would be convicted of having introduced an unhistorical detail with the aim of enhancing the dignity of the Lord's brother. But there is evidence which makes it probable that *dominus* and not *domini* should be read, making the reference to the death of Jesus.

⁶⁵ *The Jesus of History*, 122.

⁶⁶ As was first pointed out by Mr. J. O. F. Murray in his article "Evangelium secundum Petrum" (*Expositor*, Jan. 1893, pp. 55 ff.), there are echoes of the Petrine Gospel in several passages of the Latin translation of Origen's commentary on St. Matthew. The parallels (printed also in Swete, *The Akhmīm Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter*, xxx f.) show that Origen was willing to accept as authentic evangelic material some of the peculiar matter of the Gospel of Peter.

⁶⁷ The complete text has been frequently published in English editions, the best being that by H. B. Swete, *The Akhmîm Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter*, 1893. Others are : Robinson and James, *Gospel and Revelation of Peter*, 1892 ; Rendel Harris, *The Newly-Recovered Gospel of St. Peter*, 1893 ; Author of "Supernatural Religion," *The Gospel according to Peter*, 1894 ; Rutherford in extra volume of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, 1897.

⁶⁸ That is to say, by the party with heretical leanings whose leader was Marcianus, mentioned later by Serapion.

⁶⁹ *Gesch. d. NT Kanons*, ii. 748.

⁷⁰ There was, in fact, no formal decree against the private reading of certain books until the time of Constantine (see Harnack, *Bible Reading in the Early Church*, 60 f.).

⁷¹ The view maintained above was first brought forward by Kunze in *Neue Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, ii. 583 ff., iii. 58 ff.

⁷² See Zahn, *GNTK*, i. 511 ff.

⁷³ *Journal of Theological Studies*, ii. 18.

⁷⁴ See Salmon, *Introduction to the N.T.* 587.

⁷⁵ Hennecke, *NTA*, ii. 76.

⁷⁶ *The Newly-Recovered Gospel of St. Peter*, 86.

⁷⁷ In support of the contention that the Petrine Gospel was never widely known, one may quote the words of Dr. Salmon with reference to a single detail. "A convincing proof of the extraordinarily limited circulation of the Gospel of Peter is that legendary story is quite ignorant of the name Petronius, which it gives to the centurion who guarded our Lord's tomb. It is not credible that when Christians tried to make their Gospel history complete by finding names for every one who had taken part in it, if they had known anything of a Gospel purporting to come from the chief of the Apostles, they should have completely overlooked it, and allowed the much later name Longinus to supersede that which it gave" (*Introd. to N.T.* 588).

⁷⁸ *Journal of Theological Studies*, ii. 18. In the foregoing discussion of Justin's relation to the Gospel of Peter I have been much indebted to Stanton's article as well as to Stülcken in Hennecke's second volume on the Apocryphal Writings of the

New Testament. Reference should be made to these writers for a discussion of the resemblances between Justin and 'Peter' not mentioned above. It should be stated that as against the view maintained in the preceding paragraphs many eminent scholars (among them Harnack, von Soden, Sanday, and Moffatt) hold that Justin used the Gospel of Peter.

⁷⁹ *Gospel according to Peter*, 133.

⁸⁰ See the evidence in Swete, *The Akhmîm Fragment*, xviii ff.

⁸¹ Salmon, *Introduction to the N.T.* 584 f.

⁸² This is clearly brought out by the lists printed in Swete, *op. cit.* xviii ff.

⁸³ "Bruchstücke des Evangeliums und der Apokalypse des Petrus," *TU*, ix. 2, p. 33.

⁸⁴ *Two Lectures on the Gospels* (1901), p. 33.

⁸⁵ See Zahn, *GNTK*, i. 515 f.

⁸⁶ *Hom. in Matt.* 125. "In all these things (*i.e.* in the crown of thorns and in the piercing by the reed) the unique manhood was not injured, since it suffered nothing" (in his omnibus unigenita illa uirtus nocita non est, sicut nec passa est aliquid).

⁸⁷ This, I think, must be maintained in spite of the fact that Origen apparently used the same expression ἀνελήφθη of Christ's death. In the Latin translation of his commentary on Matthew (§ 140) we read: Jesus ergo cum non fuerit percussus et speraretur diu pendens in cruce maiora pati tormenta oravit Patrem et exauditus est, et statim ut clamavit ad Patrem, *receptus est*. It should further be noted that in the New Testament the word ἀνελήφθη is repeatedly used of Christ's departure into heaven (Mark xvi. 19; Acts i. 2, etc.).

⁸⁸ Swete, *op. cit.* xxxvii.

⁸⁹ Justin, *Apol.* i. 31.

⁹⁰ From at least the middle of the second century onwards it was the general belief that the actual crucifixion of Jesus was carried out by the Jews. See Bauer (*Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, 199 ff.), who further notes the fact that the Talmud shares the same view. "The Talmud knows nothing of an execution of Jesus by the Romans, but makes it

solely the act of the Jews" (Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 86; quoted by Bauer.)

⁹¹ Origen, *contra Celsum*, ii. 63. The same objection is referred to in Macarius Magnes, *Apocriticus*, ii. 14.

⁹² Another example of apologetic fiction for the establishment of faith in the resurrection is found in the *Epistola Apostolorum*, an orthodox writing of the second century (*vid. supra*, p. 131). In this case difficulties with regard to the resurrection of Jesus are met by a detailed narrative which emphasizes much more than the canonical Gospels do (Mark xvi. 11; Luke xxiv. 11) the incredulity of the disciples when the women came and announced that the Lord was risen from the dead. The passage may be given in full. "As they (the women) mourned and wept the Lord appeared and spoke to them: 'Weep not; I am He whom ye seek. But let one of you go to your brethren and say to them: Come, our Master is risen from the dead.' Martha came and told this to us. We said to her: 'Woman, what do you wish with us? Is it possible for one who was dead and buried to be alive?' We did not believe her (when she said) that the Saviour was risen from the dead. Then she returned to the Lord and said to Him: 'None of them has believed me that Thou art alive.' He said: 'Let another of you go and tell them again.' Mary came and told us again and we did not believe her. She went back to the Lord and told Him. Then the Lord said to Mary and her sisters: 'Let us go to them.' And He came and found us within: He called us without, but we thought it was a ghost and did not believe that it was the Lord. Then He said to us: 'Come, fear not. I am your Master whom you, Peter, denied three times; and will you now deny me again?' We approached Him, doubting in our hearts whether it was He. Then He said to us: 'Why are ye still in doubt and unbelieving? I am He who spoke to you of my flesh and death and resurrection. But that ye may know that I am He, do you, Peter, put your finger in the nailprints in my hands, and do you, Thomas, put your finger in the spear-wound in my side; but you, Andrew, behold my feet and see whether they cleave to the earth. For it stands written in the prophet, The foot of a ghostly demon does not cleave to the earth.' Then we felt Him that we might truly know whether He was risen in

the flesh, and we fell on our face, acknowledging our sins that we had been unbelieving" (Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung*, 39 ff.).

⁹³ Bauer, *op. cit.* 257.

⁹⁴ Ch. iii. 16 f. : "And (Gabriel) the angel of the Holy Spirit and Michael the chief of the holy angels on the third day will open the sepulchre, and the Beloved, sitting on their shoulders, will come forth."

⁹⁵ A considerable body of literature has been devoted to the *descensus ad inferos*. A recent and admirable discussion of the question will be found in an appendix to Schmidt's *Gespräche Jesu*, 453 ff. The excellent article by Loofs (Hastings, *ERE*, iv. 654 ff.) should be consulted; also article by Bernard (Hastings, *DAC*, i. 289 ff.).

⁹⁶ Justin, *Dial.* 72; Irenæus, *Hær.* iii. 20. 4, iv. 22. 1, 33. 1, 12; v. 31. 1; *Epideixis*, 78. The saying is ascribed by Justin and Irenæus (twice) to Jeremiah; in another passage Irenæus ascribes it to Isaiah. Justin (*Dial.* 72) mentions it as one of the passages in Scripture which the Jews had suppressed, but it is without doubt of Christian origin. It is remarkable that the saying is found in no other Christian writer.

⁹⁷ Schmidt, *op. cit.* 87.

⁹⁸ Among those holding this view are Dieterich and Zahn in Germany, and James, Burkitt, and Bartlet in England. These scholars, however, differ in the opinion which they hold as to the relation of the apocalyptic portion of the Gospel to the Apocalypse of Peter which is referred to as a separate work by ecclesiastical writers. (An Ethiopic version of the Apocalypse was published in *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, 2nd Series, vol. v. No. 2, pp. 198 ff., and was discussed by James in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, xii. (1911) pp. 36 ff., 362 ff., 573 ff.). While James agrees with Zahn that the Akhmim fragment was borrowed from an older Apocalypse of Peter, Bartlet, following Dieterich, believes that the Apocalypse "arose only by fission from the larger body of the Gospel of Peter, and in this form attained greater vogue than its parent, which was compromised by semi-docetic features and an appearance of rivalry and conflict with the canonical Gospels at certain points" (*Review of Theology and Philosophy*, Dec. 1911,

p. 336). Burkitt is also of this opinion (*The Gospel History and its Transmission*, 336, n. 2).

⁹⁹ Dieterich (*Nekyia*, 16) maintains that the revelation was given before the Passion and took the place of the apocalyptic sections in Matt. xxiv. xxv.; Mark xiii.; Luke xxi. This opinion I consider to be barred, not only by the character of the Petrine apocalypse which would have completely broken the thread of the narrative of Christ's ministry, but still more by the fact that we are told that the revelation was given to encourage the disciples in their work of teaching, which implies that they had already received their commission to evangelize the world.

¹⁰⁰ *Hecr.* iii. 11. 8: "It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For since there are four quarters of the world in which we live and four universal winds, and the Church is scattered over all the earth and the Gospel and spirit of life is the pillar and ground of the Church, it is reasonable that she should have four pillars, breathing immortality from all sides and kindling afresh the life of men. Hence it is evident that the Word, the Artificer of all things, who sitteth upon the cherubim and holdeth all things together, when He was made manifest to men, gave us the Gospel in a fourfold form but held together by one spirit."

¹⁰¹ It cannot be said with certainty that emanationism, the best example of which is found in the system of Valentinus, was characteristic of all Gnostic teaching. In particular, it is disputed whether Basilides, of whose system different accounts are given by Hippolytus and Irenæus, accepted or rejected the principle of emanation. For a short account of this question, see Peake in Hastings, *ERE*, ii. 428 ff.

¹⁰² The spiritual essence was not, however, present in all men, but only in an elect class—the spiritual (*πνευματικοί*). Another class were of the earth earthy (*χρειακοί, ἑλικοί*) and as such were incapable of redemption.

¹⁰³ Fate (*εἰμαρμένη*), conceived as the dominion of astral powers, is thus referred to in Hermes Trismegistos (ed. Ménard, p. 289 f.): "Every star has its demon, good or bad. . . . All these demons are set over the things of earth; they uphold and cast down the condition of states and of single individuals; they form

our souls after their likeness. . . . The rational part of the soul alone is not subject to the demons ; it is capable of receiving God, who illumines it through a beam of the sun. Those who are thus enlightened are few in number, and the demons keep far from them ; for neither demons nor gods have any power over a beam from God " (quoted by Barth, " *Die Interpretation des NT in der Valentinianischen Gnosis*," *TU*, xxxvii. 3. 47).

¹⁰⁴ The Greek original reconstructed by Reitzenstein is found in *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 113 f.

¹⁰⁵ *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1912, pp. 146 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Barth, *Die Interpretation des NT in der Valentinian. Gnosis*, 85 f.

¹⁰⁷ *Hibbert Journal*, *loc. cit.* 138.

¹⁰⁸ Preuschen, quoted by Bevan, *ibid.* 152.

¹⁰⁹ Irenæus, *Hær.* i. 3. 2 ; 30. 14.

¹¹⁰ It is interesting to observe that the form of the dialogue in the granting of special revelations, which may have been derived from Jewish apocalyptic literature, is found also in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and other early catholic writings. The extant fragments of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* are in the form of conversations between Jesus and Salome who figured largely in apocryphal literature.

¹¹¹ *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt*, 180.

¹¹² With reference to the strange ejaculations with which the prayers of the Gnostic mystery-ritual were interspersed it may be sufficient to quote Dr. Bigg's words : " These unmeaning and reiterated yells were intended, no doubt, to work up the devotee into a state of frenzy ; but they were also supposed to form a sacred language, understood of God though not of man, and powerful to call down divine help which might otherwise be refused. We find them in the old Baal worship and in some of the Gnostic *Acts*, and they probably formed a leading feature in all the newer types of paganism " (*The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, 65).

¹¹³ All Gnostics, however, were not encratites ; the Valentinians were not. On the other hand, as we learn most clearly from the Acts of Paul, there were catholic Christians who believed that abstinence from all sexual relations was necessary for everlasting blessedness.

¹¹⁴ " *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferste-*

hung," *TU*, 1919, xliii. The Greek original of the *Epistola* is lost. The Coptic version in a mutilated condition was discovered by Schmidt in 1895 in the Institute of the French Archæological Mission in Cairo, and a preliminary account of it was given by him the same year at a meeting of the Berlin Academy (*Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie*, 1895, pp. 705 ff.). An Ethiopic text was published in 1913 by Guerrier under the title "La testament en Galilée de Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ." The Ethiopic text consists of two parts, the former and much the shorter containing a revelation given to the disciples in Galilee after the resurrection, the latter containing the *Epistola*. Schmidt has conclusively shown that the two parts were originally separate; the former, which deals chiefly with signs of the end of the world, is identical with the apocalyptic part published in Rahmani's Syriac edition of "Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi." The *Epistola* is found also in an Armenian version, and a fragment of it in a Latin text from a Vienna palimpsest was published by Bick in 1908 (*Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie*, Bd. clix.).

¹¹⁵ Harnack says (*Altchr. Litt.* ii. 568): "The *descensus Christi* through the heavens is a frequently handled theme, lying on the borders of ecclesiastical speculation." With reference to the passage in the *Epistola* describing Christ's incarnation, Schmidt gives utterance to a much needed warning. "It is a quite perverse proceeding to declare without more ado that a conception found in Gnostic writings is specifically Gnostic, without first of all considering whether the Gnostics did not rather employ in their own sense an idea which was prevalent among those belonging to the Great Church" (*Gespräche Jesu*, 289).

¹¹⁶ See H. A. A. Kennedy, *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, 32.

¹¹⁷ *Republic*, 378 D.

¹¹⁸ Eusebius, *H.E.* vi. 19.

¹¹⁹ The phrase is taken from a saying of Valentinus preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* vi. 6).

¹²⁰ Barth, *op. cit.* 46.

¹²¹ The main sources of information are Irenæus (*Hær.* i. 4 ff.), Clement of Alexandria's "Excerpts from Theodotus," and the fragments of the commentary on the Fourth Gospel by Heracleon "The Fragments of Heracleon," by A. E. Brooke, *Texts and*

Studies, i. 4). The close agreement between Irenæus and Clement makes it clear that both drew from a Gnostic writing which had a wide circulation—probably a book by Ptolemæus, the chief of the Western Valentinians (see Barth, 19). The fragments of Heracleon's work are found in Origen's commentaries on St. John.

¹²² Cf. also Origen, *c. Cels.* i. 60, where we read: "It is probable that since at the birth of Jesus 'a multitude of the heavenly host praised God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men,' the evil spirits on that account became feeble and lost their strength, the falsity of their sorcery being manifested and their power being broken; this overthrow being brought about, not only by the angels having visited the terrestrial regions on account of the birth of Jesus, but also by the power of Jesus Himself and His innate divinity. The Magi, accordingly, wishing to produce the customary results which formerly they used to perform by means of certain spells and sorceries, sought to know the reason of their failure, conjecturing the cause to be a great one; and beholding a divine sign in the heaven, they desired to learn its significance. I am therefore of opinion that possessing as they did the prophecies of Balaam, which Moses also records, inasmuch as Balaam was celebrated for such predictions, and finding among them the prophecy about the star and the words, 'I shall show him to him but not now; I deem him happy although he will not be near,' they conjectured that the man whose appearance had been foretold along with that of the star had actually come into the world; and having predetermined that he was superior in power to all demons and to all common appearances and powers, they resolved to offer him homage."

¹²³ Clem. Alex., *Epit. eclog.* 7; Ignatius, *Ephes.* 18. 2; Tertullian, *de bapt.* 4.

¹²⁴ Irenæus, *Hær.* i. 30. 12.

¹²⁵ Robinson, *Texts and Studies*, iv. 2, p. 58.

¹²⁶ See Barth, *TU*, xxxvii. 3. 49 ff.

¹²⁷ *Early Church History*, ii. 21.

¹²⁸ Irenæus (*Hær.* iii. 11. 7) states that the followers of Valentinus made copious use (*plenissime utentes*) of the Fourth Gospel. A fragment preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* ii. 20. 114) reveals Valentinus' use of St. Matthew's Gospel and the nature

of his comments on "Blessed are the pure in heart." The passage shows us with what insight Gnostic teachers penetrated into the meaning of Christ's teaching when the allegorical method was not brought into play. "One alone is good, whose revelation was given openly through the Son; and through Him alone can the heart become pure, every evil spirit being thrust out of the heart. For the multitude of evil spirits dwelling in it do not suffer it to be pure, but each of them performs his own deeds, often insulting it with unseemly lusts. The heart seems to be treated somewhat like a caravanserai. For the latter has holes and ruts made in it and is often filled with refuse, men living filthily in it and taking no care for the place since it belongs to others. In like manner also the heart, so long as there is no care taken of it, is impure, the dwelling-place of many demons; but when the only good Father visits it, it is made holy and beams with light. He is blessed who has such a heart, for he shall see God."

¹²⁹ "A conception which (as Barth remarks) probably hits the original intention of the evangelist" (p. 77).

¹³⁰ Heracleon shows much good sense in his comments on the words in Matt. x. 32: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father in heaven." The passage is preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* iv. 9. 71), where we read: "In explanation of these words Heracleon, the most distinguished of the Valentinian school, says expressly that there is one confession by faith and conduct and another with the voice. Now the confession with the voice is made also before the authorities, and this alone, he says, the most consider confession, not soundly. Even the hypocrites can make this confession. . . . Confession by the voice is not universal but partial; but that, as he now says, is universal which is seen in works and deeds which correspond to faith in Him. This confession is followed by that which is partial, namely, that made before the authorities, if it should be necessary and if the reason dictates. For he will rightly confess with the voice when he has first of all confessed with the disposition. . . ."

¹³¹ *Adv. Marcionem*, iv. 4.

¹³² Irenæus, *Hær.* i. 3. 6.

¹³³ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem*, iv. 21.

¹³⁴ *De carne Christi*, 5.

¹³⁵ A discussion of the Virgin Birth is out of place here. But it may be remarked that the only difficulties with regard to it which are worthy of being treated seriously by religious men rest not on *a priori* considerations as to its possibility or impossibility, but on certain facts brought to light by the criticism of the records. No one has the right to say that the Virgin Birth is incredible because it is not in that fashion that human beings are brought into the world; the personality of Jesus is so great a mystery and is so plainly inexplicable by merely natural causes, that it may well have required for its origin an exceptional creative act of God. On the other hand, the conviction that a unique manner of entrance into the world was fitting in Jesus' case can serve to strengthen belief in the supernatural birth only when one is persuaded that the story could not have arisen if such a birth had not actually occurred. The real difficulties arise from an unprejudiced application of the principles of historical criticism, but great as these difficulties undoubtedly are, they are not sufficient to compel a negative conclusion. The most that they can do is to show that dogmatism on the positive side is not warranted; whence it follows that when men believe in Jesus as the Divine Saviour and ever living Lord of life, suspension of judgment with regard to the Virgin Birth should not be regarded as a defect of Christian faith. Compare Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 404 f.

¹³⁶ With regard to Jewish calumnies see Justin, *Dial.* 17. 108, 117; Tertullian, *Ad Nat.* i. 14. *Adv. Marc.* iii. 23; Origen, *contra Cels.* ii. 10, vi. 27.

¹³⁷ The most noticeable of the sutures which betray the existence of different accounts used by the author in the compilation of his work is seen by comparing chs. 8 and 12; in the former Mary's age is given as twelve, in the latter as sixteen, although the interval between the incidents described is not more than a month or two.

¹³⁸ See von Lehner, *Die Marienverehrung in den ersten Jahrhunderten*, 280.

¹³⁹ The Armenian version, more in harmony with Oriental sentiment, represents the nurse as comforting Anna in her disappointment that the child was not a boy. "You have given birth

to a little girl, but she is very beautiful, pleasant to look upon, shapely, pure, without the slightest defect."

¹⁴⁰ The contentment of Mary, although she is left behind in the temple by her parents, is felt to be unnatural by the writer of the Armenian version, who, once again sensitive to ordinary human feeling, represents her as being home-sick.

¹⁴¹ It was important for the author's purpose that Joseph should be represented as an old man. Later tradition gave his age at the time as eighty or even more. "Eighty years more or less," says Epiphanius (*Hær.* 51. 10).

¹⁴² The common view in the early Church was that Mary was descended from David. So *Ascension of Isaiah*, xi. 2; *Acts of Paul* (Corinthian Letter, v. 5); Justin, *Dialogue*, 43. 45. 100, etc.; Irenæus, *Hær.* iii. 21. 5; Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 9, etc. It was important to assert this, since in the New Testament Jesus was stated to be "of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. i. 3; also Matt. i. 1; Acts ii. 30, xiii. 23; 2 Tim. ii. 8). On the other hand, the *Epistle of Barnabas* (ch. 12) will not have it that Jesus was the Son of David, and as we know from Origen and Augustine there were those in the third and later centuries who maintained that Mary was of the tribe of Levi.

¹⁴³ Joseph's long absence from home was, of course, demanded by the apologetic scheme of the author, who accordingly was obliged to lend some verisimilitude to conduct so strange in Mary's divinely chosen guardian by representing him as sorrow-stricken for his neglect of duty.

¹⁴⁴ There is a reference in this to Simeon's prophecy (Luke ii. 34) that Jesus should be for the rising and falling of many in Israel, and the purpose of introducing the episode here is no doubt to suggest that the travail of Mary was not physical but purely spiritual.

¹⁴⁵ A well-known passage in Ignatius (*Ephes.* 19) has been frequently quoted as a suggestive parallel to the suspension of movement in the Protevangelium: "Hidden from the prince of this world was the virginity of Mary and her childbearing and the death of the Lord—three mysteries of shouting *which were wrought in the silence of God.*" But the meaning of Ignatius seems to have been something different; his words point to the origin of the

mysteries which he mentions in the secret counsels of the Most High. On the other hand, the sympathy of nature with the great event which is the point of the passage in the *Protevangelium* is reflected in the *Sibylline Oracles* (viii. 174 f.): "When the child was born, the earth stretched itself out joyfully towards Him; the heavenly throne laughed and the world rejoiced." A striking parallel to the whole passage, which shows that the author was dealing with a popular and widely spread conception, is found in the account of the Buddha's birth: "Flowers partially open their cups and yet do not bloom; heavenly virgins appear motionless in the air; the winds are become still; the rivers cease to flow; all the heavenly bodies are in a state of rest; and all human activity is arrested" (quoted by Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu*, 67, from G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, "Indische Einflüsse auf evangelische Erzählungen," in Bousset-Gunkel's *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, iv. 63 ff.). Was the modern hymn-writer influenced by the same thought when he wrote:

"The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing"?

¹⁴⁶ Clement of Alexandria apparently refers to the Salome incident when he says in the *Stromateis* (vii. 16): "Most people, as it appears, even now believe that Mary ceased to be a virgin through the birth of her child, though that was not the case; for some say that after her delivery she was found when examined to be a virgin."

¹⁴⁷ The only remarkable addition to the canonical narrative is the description of the star given by the Magi to Herod. "We saw a very great star shining among these stars and eclipsing them so that the stars were not seen. And thus we knew that a king was born to Israel, and we are come to worship him" (ch. 21).

¹⁴⁸ The slanders were of Jewish origin. Celsus puts them into the mouth of a Jew whom he represents as entering into discussion with Jesus.

¹⁴⁹ Amann, *Le Protévangile de Jacques*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *Ecclus.* xxxviii. 25 ff.: "How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough . . . and whose talk is of bullocks? . . . So

every carpenter and workmaster, that laboureth night and day . . . they shall not be sought for in public counsel, nor sit high in the congregation; . . . they cannot declare justice and judgment; and they shall not be found where parables are spoken."

¹⁵¹ The influence of a narrative such as that which relates the birth of Samuel (1 Sam. i.) is plainly discernible.

¹⁵² Angels play a great part in the Protevangelium.

¹⁵³ Amann (*op. cit.* 25) has remarked that Mary was the first *virgo subintroducta*, the earliest example of those virgins who contracted a spiritual marriage with Christian men and lived with them in chastity. Mary was given to Joseph as a wife only in name, in reality as a consecrated virgin to be protected and kept pure. There is nothing in the canonical Gospels to give support to the idea that Joseph was an aged widower, but this detail was required by the aim of the author of the Protevangelium. Joseph because of his age was to be thought of rather as a father to Mary than as a husband. "Never did a *virgo subintroducta* find herself in more favourable conditions" (Amann, 38).

¹⁵⁴ The *Ascension of Isaiah* (ch. 11. 7 ff.) emphasizes even more than the Protevangelium the marvellous character of the birth of Jesus. "And after two months of days while Joseph was in his house and Mary his wife, but both alone, it came to pass that when they were alone Mary straightway looked with her eyes and saw a small babe, and she was astonished. And after she had been astonished, her womb was found as formerly before she had conceived. And when her husband Joseph said unto her, What has astonished thee? his eyes were opened and he saw the infant and praised God, because into his portion God had come. And a voice came to them, Tell this vision to no one. And the story regarding the infant was noised abroad in Bethlehem. Some said, The Virgin Mary hath borne a child, before she was married two months. And many said, She has not borne a child, nor has a midwife gone up (to her), nor have we heard the cries of (labour) pains. And they were all blinded respecting Him, and they all knew regarding Him, though they knew not whence He was" (Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, 76 f.).

¹⁵⁵ *Adv. Marc.* iv. 21; *De carne Christi*, 20. 21. 23.

¹⁵⁶ *Adv. Marc.* iv. 19; *De carne Christi*, 7.

¹⁵⁷ *Strom.* vii. 16. 93.

¹⁵⁸ *Comm. in Matthæum*, tom. x. 17.

¹⁵⁹ *Dial.* 78: "When the child was born in Bethlehem, since Joseph could not find a lodging in that village, he took up his quarters in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ and laid Him in a manger." As we learn from later writers, the cave as the place of Christ's birth was a generally accepted fact. Origen states that the cave in which Jesus was born was known and pointed out in his day. "With respect to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, if any one desires . . . to have additional evidence from other sources, let him know that in conformity with the narrative in the Gospel regarding His birth there is shown the cave in Bethlehem where He was born, and in the cave a manger where He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. That sight is much talked of in the neighbourhood, even among the enemies of the faith, it being said that in that cave was born a certain Jesus whom the Christians worship" (*c. Celsum*, i. 51). See also Eusebius, *Demonstr. evang.* vii. 2. 15; *Vita Constant.* iii. 41 ff. Epiphanius actually attributes the notice about the cave to the author of the Third Gospel: "Luke says that the child immediately after His birth was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger and cave" (*Hær.* 51. 9). In the earliest Armenian manuscript of the Gospels (ninth cent.), Matt. ii. 9 is given as follows: "The star . . . came and stood over the cave where the child lay." There is no ground for concluding, as Preuschen does (*ZNTW*, iii. 360), that this was the original text of Matthew, and that "the cave" was afterwards struck out because Christians did not like the parallel suggested by the cave associated with the rites of Mithra.

¹⁶⁰ Hermes was born in a cave in Arcadia; the birth of Mithra is represented on several monuments by a figure emerging from the cleft of a rock. The cave, as already noted, played a great part in Mithraism. In their use of a cave Justin suggested that the followers of Mithra borrowed from Christianity under Satanic influence. "Those who handed down the mysteries of Mithra were inspired by the devil to say that in a place called among them a cave they were initiated by him" (*Dial.* 78).

¹⁶¹ This was clearly the thought in the mind of the author of

Pseudo-Matthew. "The angel . . . directed Mary to dismount and to enter a subterranean cave, in which there was never any light but always darkness, because the sunshine never penetrated there. But when Mary entered, the whole cave shone with light as if the sun had been there, and a divine light illumined the cave as if it had been noonday; nor did the divine light fail day or night as long as Mary was there" (ch. 13. 2).

¹⁶² It was with reference to the stories of the Protevangelium that Jerome used the phrase *deliramenta apocryphorum* (*De perpetua virginitate adversus Helvidium*, ch. 8).

¹⁶³ *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, i. lx.

¹⁶⁴ *Nisibene Hymns*, 27. 8.

¹⁶⁵ *De Natura et Gratia*, ch. 36. The quotation is taken from von Lehner, *Die Marienverehrung*, p. 170.

¹⁶⁶ Irenæus, *Hær.* v. 19. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Ambrose, *Sermo* 45.

¹⁶⁸ The last passage is quoted from Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 3 (see also p. 234).

¹⁶⁹ *Circular Letter*, Feb. 2, 1849.

¹⁷⁰ *Gespräche Jesu*, 228. See Zahn, *Gesch. d. NT Kanons*, i. 747.

¹⁷¹ It is possible that the author of the Fourth Gospel had miraculous events related of Christ's boyhood in mind, when he wrote (ch. ii. 11): "this beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory."

¹⁷² Michel, *Évangiles apocryphes*, i. xxxi.

¹⁷³ Renan, *L'Église Chrétienne*, p. 513 (quoted by Michel).

¹⁷⁴ Bauer (*Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der NT Apokryphen*, 95 f.) says: "Many of the stories of the Gospel of Thomas have parallels in non-Christian cycles of legends, parallels which point to the employment of similar motives and others which can be explained only on the assumption of a much stronger connexion. The sparrows made of clay which receive life remind one of the Egyptian fairy tale: Ne-neferka-Ptah makes out of wax a boat manned by rowers. He speaks a magic word and makes them alive. The wonder-working boy Jesus recalls the young Krishna, who reveals his divine power when he was yet of tender years." The story of Jesus at school has been attributed to Indian influence;

there is a very similar account given of the Buddha's first day at school (Bauer, *ibid.* 96). But the fact that the *Lalita-Vistara*, in which the story of the Buddha is given, probably belongs to the third century A.D., suggests that the borrowing, if borrowing there was, was from the Childhood Gospel. In questions of this kind it is well to remember that "a religious-historical parallel is never satisfactorily elucidated by the mere setting side by side of similar stories or ideas from two forms of religion" (Beth, *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1916, p. 196). The same story may appear in different religions without borrowing on either side, in which case the parallel is to be explained by the similar working of the human mind, or by the fact that history repeats itself.

¹⁷⁵ The familiar designation "original apostles" as applied to the Twelve is kept for convenience, although it is by no means certain, and is indeed unlikely, that the apostolic title was given them by Jesus or was ever borne by them in the earliest days to distinguish them from others. Had that been the case, as it is recorded to have been in Mark iii. 14, vi. 30, and in Luke, it is not easy to understand (as von Dobschütz urges in *Probleme des apostolischen Zeitalters*, 103 ff.) how the idea of the apostolate could have been extended later to cover those engaged in the mission work of the Church.

¹⁷⁶ The view, now generally rejected but defended in recent years by Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 189, that by τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων the Twelve are meant, comes to grief on the fact that the expression, which obviously is bitterly sarcastic, would, if applied to the Twelve by St. Paul, have been altogether out of harmony with his consciousness of unity with them as reflected, for instance, in 1 Cor. xv. 5-11. See Hoennicke, *Das Judenchristentum*, 221 f.

¹⁷⁷ We learn from the *Epistola Apostolorum* that even in the second century doubts were raised by Jewish Christians as to St. Paul's apostolic authority. That writing vindicates his position alongside the Twelve by means of a revelation given by the Risen Lord to the disciples, announcing the coming of Paul, his conversion, and his appointment by the will of God to be the preacher of the Gospel to the nations. See Schmidt, "Gespräche Jesu" (*TU*, iii. 13), 96 ff.

¹⁷⁸ How much remained untold of St. Paul's experiences may be gathered from the passage in 2 Corinthians (xi. 23 ff.).

¹⁷⁹ On this question von Dobschütz, in a review of Schmidt's *Die alten Petrusakten*, says (*Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1903, No. 12): "I cannot allow that as literary εἶδος for these πράξεις only the Acts of the Apostles by Luke come into consideration. One can only assert that when one overlooks the great difference between them: in Luke history, here ψευδῆς; there mission by means of the word, here περιτολογία; there simple brevity, here diffuseness of fancy; there absolute innocence with regard to fellowship with women (e.g. Lydia), here the universal perversion of the love-motive into asceticism—as many differences from Luke as there are affinities with the flourishing travel-romance of the period." Schmidt, replying to this criticism (*Acta Pauli*, 185), denies that he had overlooked the difference, which is true, but he can hardly be said to have appreciated it at its proper value.

¹⁸⁰ See Schmidt, *Die alten Petrusakten*, 27 ff.

¹⁸¹ *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 114.

¹⁸² *Texts and Studies*, v. x.

¹⁸³ *Die alten Petrusakten*, 77.

¹⁸⁴ *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 114.

¹⁸⁵ *H.E.* iii. 25. 4-7.

¹⁸⁶ See Schmidt, *Die alten Petrusakten*, 119.

¹⁸⁷ Harnack (*Chron.* 494), discussing the Acts of Paul, says: "The grounds which Lipsius has adduced are so weak and so dependent on the prejudice that wonderful stories and strict asceticism are always a proof of Gnosticism, that one may safely leave his hypothesis to dispose of itself."

¹⁸⁸ See Hennecke, *NTA*, ii. 355.

¹⁸⁹ *Gesch. d. altchr. Litt.* i. lx, note 5.

¹⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that the charge brought against the apostles in the apocryphal Acts of misleading women is found in a gloss on Luke xxiii. 2, occurring in Marcion's text, against Jesus Himself: κωλύοντα φόρους Καίσαρι διδόναι καὶ ἀποστρέφοντα τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ τὰ τέκνα.

¹⁹¹ See, e.g., Conybeare, *Monuments of Early Christianity*, 23.

¹⁹² *Gospel History and its Transmission*, 211.

¹⁹³ The truth of this would be put beyond question if we could

with certainty regard the Epistle to the Ephesians as Pauline. In ch. v. 22 ff. we have a lofty conception of the relation between husband and wife, which reaches its culminating point in the thought that marriage is a type of the union subsisting between Christ and the Church. Looked at from the point of view indicated above, there is nothing in St. Paul's utterances in 1 Corinthians which compels us to regard this conception as un-Pauline.

¹⁹⁴ "Virgines Christi," *TU*, xxxi. 2. 63.

¹⁹⁵ The practical acceptance of the encratite ideal by Christians was, however, sufficiently common to attract the notice of pagans, as witness the words of Galen the physician (*De sententiis politicae Platonicae*: passage quoted in Koch, *op. cit.* 62), who declares that there were Christians who "verecundia quadam ducti ab usu rerum venerearum abhorrent. Sunt enim inter eos et feminae et viri qui per totam vitam a concubitu abstinerint."

¹⁹⁶ Clement (*Strom.* iii. 15. 97) records an uncanonical saying of Jesus in favour of the celibate life: "Again the Lord saith, Let him that is married not put away, and *let him that is unmarried marry not.*" This is practically identical with the injunction given by St. Paul in 1 Cor. vii. 27, and it is possible that Clement through a fault of memory attributed the saying to Jesus. Or, what is more likely, he may have regarded the words of the apostle as spoken by the Lord (cf. *Pæd.* i. 6. 49). It is noteworthy that he quotes Eph. iii. 15 ("of whom is every family in heaven and on earth") as a saying of our Lord. See Resch, *Agrapha*, 207 ff., who believes that it is an authentic saying of Jesus repeated by the apostle. Clement, while favourable to celibacy, is very decided in declaring that marriage is a divine appointment (*Strom.* ii. 23). Celibacy, the condition of the true "Gnostic," is superior to marriage as being more favourable to one's personal salvation, but the married man "has the advantage in the conduct of life, inasmuch as he actually preserves a faint image of the true Providence" (*ibid.* vii. 12). Further, Clement declares that the family is the ideal unity. "Who are the two or three gathering in the name of Christ, in whose midst the Lord is? Does He not mean man, wife, and child by the three, seeing woman is made to match man by God?" (*ibid.* iii. 10. 1).

¹⁹⁷ Hort is guarded in his view (*Judaistic Christianity*, 186 f.):

"The common description of [Docetism] as Gnosticism involves a large assumption. It is true that Docetism was an important element in various 'Gnostic' systems, . . . but it is very doubtful whether conversely all Docetism had Gnostic accompaniments." On the other hand, Fortescue (Hastings, *ERE*, iv. 833) declares that "all early Docetes were Gnostics. Docetism was always a consequence of that representation of matter as evil which is the common element of Gnostic schools." This statement is much too strong.

¹⁹⁸ *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 151.

¹⁹⁹ Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*, 95.

²⁰⁰ A striking instance occurs in ch. 53 of borrowing from the Acts of John, 22.

²⁰¹ The Acts of John is the earliest witness to the ecclesiastical tradition of the apostle's residence and activity in Ephesus.

²⁰² The extract from the minutes of the Council runs as follows :
 εἰ παρίσταται τῇ ἁγίᾳ ταύτῃ καὶ οἰκουμένηκῃ συνόδῳ, γένοιτο ἀπόφασις, τοῦ μηκέτι ἀπογράφεσθαι τινὰς τὸ μιὰν τοῦτο βιβλίον· ἡ ἁγία σύνοδος εἶπεν· μηδεὶς ἀπογραφέσθω· καὶ οὐ μόνον τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὶ αὐτὸ ἄξιον κρίνομεν ἀποδίδοσθαι (quoted in Zahn, *Acta Joannis*, 212).

²⁰³ Hastings, *DAC*, i. 36.

²⁰⁴ Compare the words of Ignatius (*Rom.* 7. 2 f.): "My love (of the world) has been crucified, and there is in me no fire of material longing, but only a water that lives and speaks in me and says: Come to the Father. I have no delight in the food of corruption or in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God which is the flesh of Christ, who was of the seed of David, and for a draught I desire His blood which is love incorruptible."

²⁰⁵ *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, i. 98.

²⁰⁶ *Texts and Studies*, v. xxi.

²⁰⁷ *Contra Felicem*, ii. 6: "In actibus scriptis a Leutio (Leucio), quos tanquam actus apostolorum scribit, habes ita positum: etenim speciosa figmenta et ostentatio simulata et coactio visibilium nec quidem ex propria natura procedunt sed ex eo homine qui per se ipsum deterior factus est per seductionem."

²⁰⁸ With the language used of Christ in the Acts of John may

be compared the hymn of Christ's creative power in the catholic writing, the *Epistola Apostolorum*, also belonging to the second century: "Our Lord and our Saviour is Jesus Christ, . . . who through His word commanded the heavens to appear, who created the earth and the things that are in it, who set bounds to the sea that it might not pass over them, and created abysses and springs that they might flow in channels over the earth, who made day and night, sun and moon and the stars in heaven, who divided the light and the darkness, who called hell into existence, who in a moment dost appoint the rain in winter, mist, frost and hail, and the days in their appropriate seasons, who shakes and sets fast, who made man in His image and after His likeness" (Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 27 f.).

²⁰⁹ The *Epistola Apostolorum* with reference to a docetic detail of this kind represents Jesus as saying, when He sought to convince His disciples that He had risen with the same body as that which was crucified: "Andrew, do thou behold my feet and see whether they cleave to the earth. For it is written in the prophet, The foot of a ghostly demon cleaves not to the earth" (Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 43).

²¹⁰ *Fourth Gospel*, 99.

²¹¹ The passage occurs only in a Latin translation. "Fertur ergo in traditionibus quoniam Johannes, ipsum corpus quod erat extrinsecus tangens, manum suam in profunda misisse et ei duritiam carnis nullo modo reluctatam esse sed locum manui tribuisse discipuli" (*Adumbr. ad 1 Jo. 1. 1*).

²¹² The most striking instance of the religious dance—a common feature of primitive worship—is described by Philo in the *De vita contemplativa* (ch. 10) as practised by the Therapeutæ in Egypt. Every fiftieth day, a day of peculiar sacredness, the adherents of this sect held at the close of their usual worship a common meal. After the meal "the company sang and danced through the night, first in two choirs, afterwards mingling together in a 'spiritual bacchanal,' drinking in the free love of God" (Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings of Christianity*, i. 96). Dancing in a ring was customary among the Korybantes in Asia Minor, and the custom seems to have found an early entrance into Christian circles. The practice of having sacred dances in churches, in which bishops took a

leading part, was forbidden by the Council of 692, but the prohibition was ineffective (Hastings, *ERE*, x. 361).

²¹³ It is interesting to note that this hymn forms the subject of a strikingly original and impressive musical composition by Gustav Holst, "The Hymn of Jesus," Op. 37. The hymn is sung by two full choruses antiphonally, a semi-chorus chanting the *Amens*.

²¹⁴ *Primitive Christianity*, iii. 179 f.

²¹⁵ *Harvard Theol. Review*, Jan. 1921, p. 19. See further for evidence as to the belief in the Ogdoad in orthodox circles, Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu*, 276 ff. The Ogdoad or eighth region lying beyond the seven spheres ruled by the planets was conceived as the place of rest (*ἀνάπαυσις*) into which the pious entered after the resurrection.

²¹⁶ *Adv. Marc.* iii. 8.

²¹⁷ *Catech.* iv. 9.

²¹⁸ "Platons Weltseele und das Kreuz Christi," *ZNTW*, xiv. 273 ff.

²¹⁹ Bousset, *ibid.* 273.

²²⁰ It was a favourite thought among early Christians that the form of the cross was to be seen in the very constitution of things. See Justin, *Apol.* i. 55, who regards the form of the cross as indispensable in the economy of human affairs. On this Moody remarks: "These notions are not so contemptible as they appear to be. With Baur we may recognize an intimation of the grand thought . . . that the universe was stamped with the sign of the universal religion" (*Mind of the Early Converts*, 142).

²²¹ Christian writers seem to have been attracted by the thought of the cross as "a boundary." Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* iii. 85. 3) states that the cross is a landmark between us and our past: "we have as a boundary the cross of the Lord, by which we are fenced and hedged about from our former sins." Of this conception Dr. Bigg says: "The old Gnostics called the Cross 'Horos,' the Boundary or Dividing Line. The Gnostics were a curious people, but they were right here. On this side of the Cross all history is, or ought to be, a different thing to what it is on the other, and every one who carries the Cross, in so far as he carries it, is a better citizen, a better philosopher and a better man than he

would have been otherwise " (*The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, xv).

²²² Irenæus (*Hær.* ii. 27. 2), referring to the Gnostics, says: They declare " that the Saviour taught these same things in secret, not to all but to some of the disciples who could receive them, and by means of arguments and allegories and parables made known by Him to those who understood." This secret tradition was supposed to have been given, sometimes by Jesus during His ministry, sometimes and more frequently by Him after the resurrection.

²²³ See Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*, 121.

²²⁴ Hastings, *ERE*, i. 313b.

²²⁵ Chrysostom makes use of this incident in his 25th Homily on the Acts of the Apostles, where he says: " Hear about the blessed Thecla. She gave her gold that she might see Paul, but ye, that ye may see Christ, do not give a single obol. Ye admire her deeds, but ye do not emulate them."

²²⁶ An interesting detail in the Thecla narrative is the description given of St. Paul. " He saw Paul coming, a man small in stature, bald-headed, bow-legged, vigorous, with meeting eyebrows and a somewhat prominent nose, full of grace. Sometimes he looked like a man and at other times he had the face of an angel " (ch. iii.). Whether this portrait is derived (as Zahn thinks, *GNTK*, ii. 905 f.) from the recollections of those who had seen the apostle cannot be determined. Those who agree with Ramsay (*Church in the Roman Empire*, 381 ff.) that the tale of Thecla " goes back ultimately to a document of the first century," will have no difficulty in believing that the description is trustworthy, but an early written source is doubtful. Schmidt (*Acta Pauli*, xvii f.) and Vouaux, the latest editor of the Acts (*Les Actes de Paul*, 122 f.), discredit the description. One might have expected a more flattering portrait, if the writer was drawing on his imagination, but, on the one hand, he would naturally be restrained by hints in the New Testament writings (2 Cor. x. 10; Gal. iv. 13 ff.), and, on the other, he may have been of the opinion that " true beauty is found in the expression of the face and that regularity of features and form is a matter of the most perfect indifference " (Vouaux). Later legends give a more pleasing picture of the apostle; for instance, in the *Ethiopian Contendings of the Apostles* (Budge, ii. 531) we

read: "He was a vigorous man of fine upright stature, and his countenance was ruddy with the ruddiness of the stem of the pomegranate; his complexion was clear, his nose was high and large, his eyes were dark, and his cheeks were full and bearded and of the colour of a rose."

²²⁷ Ramsay, *First Christian Century*, 83. This is the view of Zahn (*GNTK*, ii. 894) and Vouaux (*Les Actes de Paul*, 30). On the other hand, following Lipsius, Schmiedel says (*Evangelium, Briefe und Offenbarung Johannis*, 13; *RG Volksbücher*): "The man was deprived from office, not because he had been guilty of anything that we could characterize as a forgery, but because he had narrated in his book that Thecla had come forward as a teacher and had baptized herself." So Jülicher, *Einleitung*, 39. Dr. Moffatt combines both views when he says that the presbyter "was checked apparently for having illegitimately introduced ideas incompatible with the Church's creed" (*Introduction to the Literature of N.T.* 415).

²²⁸ Speaking of Plato's teaching put into the mouth of Socrates, Dr. Percy Gardner says: "It would not appear to Plato that in thus attributing the advocacy of his own views to Socrates he was doing his master any injustice. He would doubtless consider his procedure a compliment to that master and a mark of sincere gratitude" (*Historic View of N.T.* 192). (Cf. Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of N.T.* 41, 415 n.)

²²⁹ Rolffs in Hennecke, *NTA*, i. 366.

²³⁰ *Acta Pauli*, 109.

²³¹ In the same year, shortly after the discovery, Schmidt gave a preliminary account of the papyrus in *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher* (vol. vii. 117 ff.), and in 1904 the Coptic text (in facsimile) with translation and critical discussion was published in two volumes—*Acta Pauli*. A smaller edition, without the photographic reproductions of the papyrus, was issued in 1905.

²³² The Acts of Paul and Thecla was detached early from the larger work, almost certainly by the beginning of the fourth century. The first mention of its separate existence is found in an account of a visit to holy places made by Sylvia, an Aquitanian pilgrim, about the year 385 (*ibi ergo cum venissem in nomine dei facta oratione martyrium necnon etiam et lectus omnis actus sanctæ Teclæ*,

gratias domino nostro egi infinitas, qui mihi dignatus est indignæ et non merenti in omnibus desideria complere, *Peregrinatio S. Silvix Aquitanæ ad loca sancta*, ed. Gamurrini, p. 74).

²³³ Myra is not far from Attalia, the town mentioned in Acts xiv. 25 as the place from which St. Paul set sail on his return journey to Syrian Antioch.

²³⁴ The passage occurs in Nicephorus Callisti (*H.E.* ii. 25), a writer of the fourteenth century, who states that the account was taken from "the Wanderings of Paul" (περίοδοι Παύλου). Nicephorus writes as follows: "Those who have drawn up the Wanderings of Paul narrate that he suffered and at the same time did very many other things, and in particular this, when he was at Ephesus. Jerome the governor declared that Paul spoke freely and that he was pleased with what he said, but that it was not a suitable time for such words. The people of the city were enraged and put the feet of Paul in heavy irons and shut him up in prison, until he should be cast as food to the lions. Euboulla and Artemilla, the wives of prominent Ephesians, who were his disciples, went to him by night and asked for the grace of divine baptism. By a divine power and by angels bearing spears who illumined the darkness of the night by the glory of the light that was in them, Paul was released from his fetters and initiated them by means of the divine baptism, when he was come to the seashore. He returned to his bonds to be kept as food for the lions, without any of the warders of the prison learning what had happened. A lion of an enormous size and strength was let loose on him; it came to him in the amphitheatre and lay down at his feet. Though many other wild beasts were let loose, none of them was permitted to touch the holy body which was held erect by prayer. After this a tremendous hailstorm came on with a great noise and crushed the heads of many men and beasts. One of the hailstones hit Jerome on the ear, whereupon along with his friends he came to the God of Paul and received the baptism which gives salvation. As for the lion, it fled to the mountains, and Paul sailed thence to Macedonia and Greece."

²³⁵ There is a striking similarity in details between the story of Thecla's exposure to the wild beasts at Antioch and the account of the apostle's *θηριομαχία* at Ephesus given by Nicephorus Callisti.

Referring to the similarities in the two stories, Schmidt remarks that "the good presbyter had no great power of invention, but in a sense copied himself" (*Acta Pauli*, 64).

²³⁶ *De Princip.* i. 2. 3—translation by Rufinus.

²³⁷ Hystaspes was the father of the Persian King Darius who reigned 521–485 B.C. The book of prophecies attributed to him is a Christian writing belonging to the first half of the second century. The Sibyl and Hystaspes are also appealed to by Justin, *Apol.* i. 20.

²³⁸ Hennecke, *NTA*, ii. 365.

²³⁹ Vouaux (*Les Actes de Paul*, 65) contends for the view that Clement's quotation was taken from the Preaching of Paul mentioned in ps.-Cyprian, *De Rebaptismate*, 17. To the same source he would also refer the extract from John of Salisbury. But does the character of Clement's source, of some authority as he plainly regarded it, harmonize with what ps.-Cyprian says about the Preaching of Paul—a book which is filled with "forged sayings, absurd and shameful"? (*quædam alia huiuscemodi absurde ac turpiter conficta, quæ omnia in illum librum invenies congesta*). See passage in Zahn, *GNTK*, ii. 881.

²⁴⁰ Justin (*Apol.* i. 21 f.) declares that the death of Christ is not the absurdity which Greeks had taken it to be. Gods like the sons of Jupiter had suffered death. The argument in the passage from John of Salisbury was a favourite one among Christians. Origen (*contra Cels.* i. 31) writes: "Let those who would discredit the statement that Jesus died on the cross for men say whether they also refuse to accept the many accounts, current both among Greeks and Barbarians, of persons who have laid down their lives for the public good, in order to remove those evils which had fallen on cities and countries."

²⁴¹ *Acta Pauli*, 172.

²⁴² *Texts and Studies*, ii. 3, 56 f.

²⁴³ The account which St. Paul is represented as giving here of his relations with those who were apostles before him conflicts with Gal. i. 17, but it is in harmony with the conception which we find in the *Epistola Apostolorum*, where the original apostles are regarded as having played a prominent part in the conversion of St. Paul and as having instructed him in view of the heathen mission for which he was destined (Schmidt, *Gespräche*

Jesu, 190 f.). The evangelization of the Gentiles was, in the belief of the second century, shared by the Twelve and St. Paul, as is made clear by the words of the Corinthian presbyters in their letter to St. Paul: "we never heard such things, neither from you nor from the other apostles."

²⁴⁴ This identification appears to have been common in the second century; it is found in *Hermas* (*Parables*, v.), and elsewhere. See Moody, *Mind of the Early Converts*, 93.

²⁴⁵ Dr. J. Dick Fleming says: "We have no reason to suppose that the nomistic attitude is confined to Judaism or the religions of the past; it is active in the moral and religious life of all times" (*Redemption*, p. 288). Similarly Ruskin has said that "the root of every heresy is the effort of men to earn and not to receive salvation, to work rather than to see God working for them."

²⁴⁶ *De Baptismo*, 18.

²⁴⁷ *Gespräche Jesu*, 314. So Tertullian: "fiducia Christianorum resurrectio mortuorum" (*de resurr. carnis*, 1).

²⁴⁸ The passage in 2 Clement runs: "Let not any one of you say that this flesh is not judged and does not rise again. Understand ye. In what were ye saved? In what did ye recover your sight? if it was not while ye were in this flesh. Accordingly we ought to guard the flesh as a temple of God, for in like manner as ye were called in the flesh ye shall also come in the flesh. If Christ the Lord who saved us, being first spirit, became flesh and so called us, so we also shall in this flesh receive our reward." Irenæus begins his defence of the doctrine of resurrection with these words: "They are in every respect vain who despise the whole dispensation of God and deny the salvation of the flesh and treat its regeneration with contempt, declaring that it is not capable of incorruption." He closes his argument in the following manner: "That the flesh can really partake of life is shown from the fact of its being alive, for it lives on as long as it is God's purpose that it should do so. It is manifest, too, that God has the power to confer life upon it, inasmuch as He grants life to us who are in existence. Accordingly, since the Lord has power to infuse life into what He has fashioned and since the flesh is capable of being quickened, what remains to prevent its participating in incorruption which is a blissful and never-ending life granted by God?"

²⁴⁹ *Gespräche Jesu*, 71 f. Compare Irenæus (*Epideixis*, 38): "Wherefore He has demonstrated the resurrection in this that He Himself became the Firstborn from the dead and raised fallen man in Himself, leading him upwards to the highest part of heaven to the right of the glory of the Father."

²⁵⁰ Gardner, *Historic View of N.T.* 245.

²⁵¹ *Acta Pauli*, 202. See on this question of "forgery," Jülicher, *Einleitung in das NT*, 38 f.; Eng. tr. 52 f.

²⁵² *Gesch. der altchr. Litt.* i. xxvi.

²⁵³ Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, ii. 73.

²⁵⁴ Conybeare, *Monuments of Early Christianity*, 27.

²⁵⁵ Vouaux, *Les Actes de Paul*, 133.

²⁵⁶ *Early Eastern Christianity*, 194.

²⁵⁷ C. W. Mitchell, *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*, 2 vols., 1912 and 1921. In an Introductory Essay to the second and posthumous volume (Mr. Mitchell fell near Monchy in 1917) Burkitt says: "I venture to urge that one result of the texts published in these volumes is to render any connexion of Bardaisan with any part of the 'Acts of Thomas' improbable." It may be noted that in an article published in 1900 Burkitt in the then state of our knowledge of Bardaisan's teaching, held that we were justified in believing that the Acts of Thomas reflected "the religious aspirations of the great missionary Gnostic" (*Journal of Theological Studies*, i. 290). I am indebted to Dr. Burkitt for my acquaintance with the volume of the *Refutations* in which he argues in support of his change of view. Further reference to this matter will be found later in this chapter in the discussion of the famous *Hymn of the Soul*.

²⁵⁵ See Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 20.

²⁵⁸ See Haase, "Zur Bardesanischen Gnosis," *TU*, xxxiv. 4, 47 f. The dialogue, in which Bardaisan is the chief speaker, professes to have been written down by Philip, one of his disciples. Whether this is merely a literary device, Bardaisan being the real author, cannot be determined, but in any case there is no reason to question that in the *De Fato* we have the authentic teaching of "the last of the Gnostics." For an account of the dialogue, see Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 161 ff.

²⁶⁰ The passage from the dialogue runs as follows: "There are

two commandments set before us, very fit and proper exercises for our free nature: the one is that we should abstain from everything that is evil and that we hate to be done to us, and the other that we should do what is good and what we like to be done to us. For what man is physically unable to keep from stealing or lying or adultery or malicious false witness? All these things belong to the mind of man, to his disposition, not to his material lot. Even if a man be poor or diseased or old or crippled he can abstain from doing these evil deeds; and just as he can abstain from these things, so also he can love and bless and speak truth and pray for the welfare of every one he knows. And if he be well and have the opportunity of giving something of his own, he can do so; he can use the material force at his command for the support of the weak. There is no one who cannot do this. In fact, the commandments of God are concerned with those very matters which are within the range of human control. We are not commanded to carry heavy burdens of stone or wood or anything else, which only those who are strong of body are able to do; nor to build towns and found cities, which only kings are able to do; nor to steer ships which only sailors have skill to manage; nor to survey land and divide it, which only surveyors know how to do; nor to practise any other of the arts which some can do and the rest are shut out from. To us through God's kindness such equable commandments have been given as every living man can do with pleasure" (Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 169 f.).

²⁶¹ There is another tradition recorded by Eusebius (*H.E.* iii. 1) in which the sphere of Thomas is given as Parthia, the region in which Edessa was situated. Although this tradition is also mentioned by Origen, it seems unlikely that it was known at Edessa at the close of the second century; otherwise it is difficult to understand how the Acts of Thomas written there could have represented the apostle as carrying on his labours in India. One may venture to suggest that it was due to the popularity of the Acts that some connexion with Thomas was desired by the Church of Edessa. This was secured by the appearance, in the second half of the third century, of the story containing the legendary correspondence between King Abgar the Fifth and Jesus, from which we learn that the Apostle Thomas sent Thaddæus, one of the

Seventy, to Edessa after the ascension of our Lord. The legend is narrated as authentic history by Eusebius (*H.E.* i. 13) and found a place in the Syriac *Doctrine of Addai*, written about 400 A.D. When the legend was established, the connexion of Thomas with Edessa was made closer by the insertion in the Acts of Thomas of the statement that after the apostle's martyrdom in India his bones were taken away "into the regions of the West," that is, to Edessa, where a magnificent church was erected in his honour.

²⁶² Schmidt rejects the opinion that the Acts of Thomas is a Gnostic work. It is "a creation of the Syrian provincial Church which stood long under the influence of Tatian and Bardesanes, and accordingly preserved Gnosticizing tendencies" (*Gespräche Jesu*, 555). A. J. Maclean (Hastings, *ERE*, xii. 172) says: "These Acts, while unorthodox, are probably not Gnostic." But they are unorthodox only when judged by Nicene standards.

²⁶³ It should be noted that Ignatius, the vehement opponent of docetic views, speaks (*Ephes.* 19) of the incarnation and the cross as being mysteriously hidden from the prince of this world. But in other cases the idea of the deception of the devil had as its background the thought of the unreality of Christ's human nature. Cf. *Ascension of Isaiah*, xi. 17.

²⁶⁴ Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 125 ff. It is questioned whether Aphraates actually went so far as this, but Burkitt's discussion seems to me convincing.

²⁶⁵ A writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (March 24, 1921, p. 186) says: "Common sense has often had to deliver the world from the extravagances of saints and philosophers: and the other-worldliness which would have prevented men from caring to make this world habitable and this life interesting was in practice contradicted or ignored."

²⁶⁶ See the article by Haller, "Das Eigentum im Glauben und Leben der nachapostolischen Kirche," in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1891, Heft 3, pp. 478 ff.

²⁶⁷ In ch. 51 we have an example of the magical power of the Eucharist to convict of sin. The hands of a young man who had wrought a nefarious deed withered after he had partaken of the sacrament. See also Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 25 f.

²⁶⁸ Cf. 2 Cor. i. 21 f.: "Now He that stablisheth us with you

in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us. . . ." The anointing in this passage is not an anointing with oil, but with the Holy Spirit; but it is probable that the sealing mentioned refers to baptism. From primitive days baptism was called "the seal" (*σφραγίς*), probably "because in it the name of Jesus (1 Cor. i. 13) was spoken over the person baptized; for this in the belief of early Christianity was no mere symbolic action, but an effectual formula of dedication by means of which Christians were handed over into the possession of Christ" (Bousset in *Schriften d. NT*, ii. 1. 150).

²⁶⁹ It is not easy to determine which form of the prayer is nearest to the original Syriac. It has usually been taken for granted that the Greek version, with its clearly Gnostic expressions, is the more original, and that the Syriac version has toned down and altered the Gnostic phraseology; but the possibility has to be reckoned with, that the original prayer was modified (by a Manichæan translator?) in the interest of heresy. However that may be, it should be noted that "some at least of the queer phrases in the Greek are the result not of heterodox doctrine, but of the ignorance or helplessness of the translator" (Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 207).

²⁷⁰ In the present Syriac version the hymn is a mystic song of the Church. De Zwaan (Hastings, *DAC*, i. 38) expresses the opinion that "it is not safe to abandon this ancient exegesis." But on the whole it seems preferable to interpret the bride as the believing soul.

²⁷¹ An instructive study of the Syriac and Greek versions in parallel columns will be found in Hoffmann's article, "Zwei Hymnen der Thomasakten," *ZNTW*, iv. 295 ff. The Syriac text has fewer Gnostic expressions than the Greek, and Hoffmann's opinion is that the author of the latter "was a Gnostic and freely translated and interpreted according to his understanding" of the hymn. On the other hand, Haase ("Zur Bardesanischen Gnosis," *TU*, xxxiv. 4. 50) holds that the Greek version "is not only better textually, but also from the point of view of the contents is more original than the present Syriac text." The view given effect to in the translation is that in general the Syriac version is to be preferred except in those passages which seem to have suffered

change in the interest of the interpretation of the hymn as referring to the Church. The hymn is composed in parallel pairs of verses.

²⁷² Quoted by Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 138 f.

²⁷³ Bigg says (*The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, 24): "The *Hymn of the Soul* in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, written by some nameless Syrian Gnostic, is marked by an imaginative power and freshness which we should seek in vain in any classical piece of the second or third centuries."

²⁷⁴ *Texts and Studies*, v. 3 (1899), 5 f.

²⁷⁵ *Early Eastern Christianity*, 216.

²⁷⁶ According to Ephraim, Bardaisan taught that God was not the sole self-existent Being or Entity (*Īthyā*). There were under Him other uncreated Entities (*Īthyē*), four of them pure, namely, Light, Wind, Fire, and Water, and a fifth, the foul Dark substance. A seventh Entity, probably Space, enclosed all the others: God, said Bardaisan, "is in the midst of Space" (*S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations*, ii. cxxii).

²⁷⁷ *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations*, ii. cxxix f. Ephraim says: "The Philosopher of the Syrians (*i.e.* Bardaisan) made himself a laughing-stock among Syrians and Greeks, not only in that he was unable to state, but also in that he did not really know the teaching of Plato; and in (his) simplicity he hastened to calumniate Plato by (ascribing to him) the inquiries of others, though Plato had a great struggle against these (very) inquiries which Bardaisan thinks belong to Plato" (*Prose Refutations*, ii. pp. iii, iv).

²⁷⁸ Reitzenstein ("Zwei hellenistische Hymnen," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, viii. pp. 167 ff.) brings forward several myths with a similar *motif*- a king's son in a foreign country to whom a message was sent asking him to return. Stories of that kind, current among all peoples, throw some light on the *form* of the allegory; its real significance, however, is found in the truth which the writer sought to convey by it, and Reitzenstein's analogies do not give the slightest help here.

²⁷⁹ *Zeitschrift d. deutschen morgenländ. Gesellsch.* xxv. 677.

²⁸⁰ See on this Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 88 ff., 214; also *supra*, p. 60. Schmidt, while allowing that the conception of a Divine Mother was originally Gnostic, holds that the Syrian Church was no longer conscious of its derivation from a pagan

source. The idea of the Deity as Father, Mother, and Son is in his opinion "merely a petrification from the older Gnosticizing Christianity of the Syrian Church" (*Gespräche Jesu*, 560, note 1). But to regard Gnosticism even as the ultimate source of the conception is very doubtful. There is the alternative and simpler explanation: "*Rûh*, the word for wind or spirit, is feminine; in the older Syriac literature, therefore, before the influence of Greek theology made itself felt, the Holy Spirit also is feminine" (Burkitt).

²⁸¹ *Apok. Apostelgesch.* i. 296.

²⁸² This detail of the allegory seems to be derived from the parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matt. xiii. 45 f.). So Hoffmann, "Zwei Hymnen" . . . (*ZNTW*, iv. 283, 286).

²⁸³ See J. H. Moulton's paper, "It is his angel," in *Journal of Theological Studies*, iii. 514 ff., reprinted in the volume *A Neglected Sacrament*, 44 ff., where he says: "I should describe the 'representative angels' as spiritual counterparts of human individuals or communities, dwelling in heaven, but subject to changes depending on the good or evil behaviour of their complementary beings on earth" (*ibid.* 44). With reference to the passage in Matt. xviii. 10 he says: "The 'angels of the little ones' are nearest to God for the same reason as their earthly counterparts are typical members of the kingdom of heaven. As sin asserts its power over the child, its angel must correspondingly lose its privilege, to be regained only when stern conflict has for ever slain the primal enemy" (*ibid.* 48). Moulton regards this belief in representative angels, "which actually has the seal of the Lord Christ's approval," as derived from Parsiism.

²⁸⁴ See for other references to the Heavenly Robe, Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, i. 184 ff.

²⁸⁵ *ZNTW*, iii. 293.

²⁸⁶ *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*, 122.

²⁸⁷ Hennecke, *NTA*, ii. 589.

²⁸⁸ The apparent anxiety of some critics to evade this conclusion is puzzling. To begin with, Haase says (*Zur Bardesanischen Gnosis*, 58): "I consider it unlikely that a Christian Gnostic should assert about Christ that He had been overcome by matter and had forgotten His mission of redemption and had served the king of matter (the Evil One). Gnosticism, in fact, endeavours anxiously

to preserve the Soter from sinking into matter and is accordingly docetic in Christology." In spite of this just criticism, Haase adopts the view that the hymn was based on a pagan poem of redemption, and that the king's son was the Saviour. The pagan poem was modified in a Christian sense, but the reviser had no eye for the inconvenient details of the guilty slumber, etc. (*ibid.* 65). A theory which postulates a reviser of such inconceivable blindness and stupidity needs no refutation.

²⁸⁹ See Edwyn Bevan, *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1912, p. 150.

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On the union of the United Presbyterian Church with the Free Church of Scotland in October 1900, the necessary changes were made in the designation of the object of the Lectureship and the persons eligible for appointment to it, so as to suit the altered circumstances. And at the General Assembly of 1901 it was agreed that the Lectureship should in future be connected with the Glasgow College of the United Free Church. From the Memorandum, as thus amended, the following excerpts are here given :—

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B. Systematic Theology—

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(2) Christian Ethics—(a) Doctrine of Sin, (b) Individual and Social Ethics, (c) The Sacraments, (d) The Place of Art in Religious Life and Worship.

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